

# MUNSEY'S MAGAZINE

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## Double Doubloons

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—IN THIS TREASURE QUEST TALE  
OF TO-DAY THE LUCKY FINDER MEETS A PERIL  
THAT NEVER MENACES A PENNILESS  
MAN'S PEACE OF MIND

By George F. Worts

THE house itself was on a hilltop shaded by three great elms, and the hundred odd acres which accompanied it stretched away on all sides. It was like the view from a bird's eye.

There were splashes of dark green where the woodlands were, splashes of brighter green where the fields were. And an oriole uttered its flutelike melody in one of the elms.

It was, Peggy McAllister thought, a heavenly spot. There was a patch of very deep green down and away to the north of where she was sitting, a thicket of some kind of conifer trees, Norway pine or spruce—she didn't know much about trees just yet. A breeze drifted through them in her direction, a light, dry, summery breeze, fragrant of balsam.

She had dreamed so often of this place, and this morning, quite by accident, she had stumbled upon it while obeying a thirst

for wider space and cleaner air and higher horizons than Mill City afforded. The house had been built by colonial settlers, back in the days of Indians and frontier wars, at least two centuries ago, and it would last at least two hundred years more.

More recently, perhaps twenty-five years ago, a deep porch had been added to the front, where the view was best, and Peggy McAllister now sat there. She was rather limp and a little pale from her climb up the hill, but she was drinking in the view, her dark eyes glowing with the light of one who sees a dream come true. From the little plateau in front of the porch, the land fell away in a long, graceful green slope that ended, in the valley below, at an apple orchard. From the orchard the land arose again to another hilltop. Beyond that were more hills, wave upon wave, green in the near distance, but acquiring a lavender mistiness as they receded and

finally dwindled into the bright flawless blue of the sky.

She would never tire of looking over those rolling hills, building pictures of romance to fit the intervening valleys. Peggy was a girl of the city. She had never lived in the country, but coming to this little old, abandoned house was very much like coming home.

When she had rested from her climb up the hill from the R. F. D. box, where she had parked her flivver, she got up and resumed her prowling. She found herself tiptoeing, and laughed softly. She was so excited!

She wasn't, after all, exactly a trespasser. The sign nailed on the oak tree at the foot of the hill had plainly said FOR SALE. That implied, didn't it, that a prospective purchaser might take the liberty of looking over his prospective purchase?

"I wonder how much they will want for it," Peggy McAllister mused, as she venturesomely pushed open the old front door on its creaky hinges. "Much too much, probably."

The house was in a state of sad disrepair. Tenants without too much imagination had stuck coat upon coat of wall paper upon the original plaster, but the floors—the original floors—were oak planks, darkened by age, and too hard by this time to drive a nail into.

She wandered from the parlor into the dining room, and on into the kitchen, her mind busy with reconstruction plans and estimates. There was a fireplace in every room, but the windows were too small.

Peggy McAllister went through to the summer kitchen, dreaming her dream, restoring each room as she went along, making improvements, putting in a sink here, knocking down a partition there, stripping the wall paper off and restoring the pristine whiteness of the plaster; cutting out the windows and putting larger ones in with tiny square panes; adorning them with bright chintz curtains, seeing herself, busy and amused and contented, in a gingham dress of small red and white checks.

A house of her own! A garden of her own! That heavenly view! What a joy it would be!

She stopped suddenly at the kitchen door, with her eyes uplifted, her head slightly inclined to the left, in the attitude of one intently listening. She had heard a sound.

It had come from above. It had been a kind of thump. She moved a hand uncertainly through her dark bobbed hair and listened.

The sound was not repeated, and she dismissed it as caused by the wind—probably a banging shutter. She moved on into the yard.

"Dad will be crazy about this," she mentally decided. "This" was a long, low tool house in the yard in back, patently of modern construction. There was a concrete floor and a long workbench of ash, three inches thick, with holes at one end, where a vise had been. Light from generous windows flooded the dusty nook.

Beyond the tool house she stopped, with a gasp of sheer delight. Surpassing her fondest dreams, a small lake in a setting of white birches shimmered bluely under the warm summer sun.

A lake on a hilltop! It must be fed, she supposed, by springs, for there were no brooks running into it. There could not be, as long as water ran down hill only.

Upholding her scientific argument, a tiny stream departed from the lake at one end, and trickled, splashing from rock to rock, down the hill to the south, where another lake, set in lush greenery, twinkled like a star.

"Dandy for ducks," she thought, and gave a practical eye to the surroundings. There were a dozen poultry houses large enough to house a hundred chickens each. Most of the runs had rusted and collapsed.

Beyond them was a fine red barn. Why were red barns so appropriate in rural settings? A not unpleasant whiff of last year's hay came to her twitching nostrils. A mouse scampered unseen along a beam, and dust sifted down through a shaft of sunlight.

Most of this barn could be converted for chickens and ducks. They would keep no animals, except, maybe, a workhorse and a cow. Oh, by all means, a cow!

Down to its last detail, Peggy McAllister was delighted with the farm. It had everything she had always wanted—a lake, woodlands, a gorgeous view, and that price-less house.

Peggy decided to go into the house again. She had neglected to visit the upstairs.

She went in and climbed a narrow staircase to the second floor. There were four bedrooms, and one of them even contained



an old bed. It was walnut, and looked like junk; but it was really an antique. It could be done over, scraped, and rubbed, and oiled, and it would be priceless.

A small bedroom over the kitchen, she decided, she would convert into a bathroom. She saw the bathroom in her mind's eye, whitely gleaming with tile and spotless porcelain.

Once again she drew herself together suddenly, startled into an attitude of intent listening, her eyes aloft, her head tilted, her hand caught in an involuntary gesture to her bobbed hair. The thud had repeated itself.

Then she heard a slow, dragging sort of sound, as if some heavy object were being moved about. Then a chain, a heavy chain, began to clank.

Peggy McAllister uttered a thin squeal. Ghosts! The house was haunted!

All this turbulence came from the attic. The attic of her adorable house was peopled with ghosts!

Now, Peggy had never in her life been accused of cowardice, but a ghost, after all, is a ghost. She executed a quick retreat from the proposed bathroom, took the stairs three at a bound, seized the knob of the closed front door, and pulled.

It occurred to her that she had left this door ajar when she entered. It was now closed. She yanked. She yanked again. The door seemed to be stuck.

With her heart apparently banging against her ears, her eyes darting wildly this way and that, she listened. There was a measured *thump-thump-thump* above her. Planks creaked. Some heavy implement fell with a clatter.

Peggy McAllister uttered a faint scream and darted into the parlor. One of the windows was raised. She crawled out and hurried across the porch to the steps.

Gaining the comparative security of the path, she stopped, breathed deeply in relief, and looked back. No ghost, so far as she could remember, had ever dared exposure to the brightness of a summer noon sun. They faded away, didn't they, when the sun struck them? Yes, ghosts always preferred darkness and dust.

Her left hand was caught to her heart. She was no longer frightened. She was angry. The adorable house was haunted. That explained why it was untenanted by mortals, why it was now on the market. A haunted house! Not for Peggy!

She caught her breath suddenly. There was a round window in the attic. It was gray with inner dust, blue with the reflection of the sky. Dimly she saw a gray face pressed against it, the face of a man!

"Good night!" Peggy breathed.

The face disappeared. More noises followed. From the nature of them, Peggy gathered that the man was descending the stairs. Should she wait? Should she run? Was he a mortal or was he a clammy immortal?

She decided to face him. With all this bright sunlight, and the reality of the green hilltop to protect her, she was afraid of no ghost who walked the earth.

The hinges of the front door shrieked. It flew open. The man stepped out. He was red-haired, and dressed in a gray tweed suit.

He was a young man; a tall, broad-shouldered young man, with a fine strong chin, a noble forehead and a splendid set of teeth. His blue eyes were yellowish and bloodshot, and his demeanor was strange.

"I wonder," Peggy said to herself, "if he is lit." That, indeed, would have been a mysterious situation. An intoxicated young man rattling chains about in the attic of an abandoned old house!

He smiled at her dreamily.

"Are you the owner?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "Are you?"

"No," she replied, "but I'm thinking seriously of becoming the owner."

He chuckled. "That makes it unanimous, because I've just got through making up my mind that I am going to buy this place. It suits me to a T."

The situation was pregnant with humorous possibilities, none of which the beautiful girl or the slightly intoxicated young man seemed to appreciate. There was, in fact, a bristling hostility in the air.

"We can't both have it," he remarked.

"You bet we can't!" Peggy declared, vigorously.

"We might flip a coin for it," he suggested, placatingly.

"We'll flip nothing for it," Peggy said.

"It's mine."

"Why?" he inquired, no longer even pretending to smile.

"Because I saw it first!"

Now he grinned, coldly. "My dear young lady, I was up there in that attic when you came up the road. I saw you coming. I heard you come into the house.

I watched you go snooping around the barn—"

"How dare you say I was snooping!" she cried. "Besides, I've got just as much right to snoop here as you have. What were you doing, snooping around the attic?"

"As the prospective purchaser of this farm," he replied, "I can snoop around the attic of my house as much as I please."

"It isn't your house," she said angrily. "It's my house!"

"Huh!" he snorted. "What does a girl like you want with a farm, anyhow?"

"My father and I are going to raise chickens and ducks," she informed him.

"I might have known it," he groaned. "Chickens and ducks! It's a mighty good thing I'm going to save this fine old place from such a fate."

"Well," she countered, "what would you have done with it?"

"You mean, what am I *going* to do with it? I'm going to raise hogs."

Peggy McAllister uttered a shrill laugh, in which no mirth was present.

"Hogs!" she echoed. "Yes, you *would* desecrate this nice old place with hogs. The filthy things!"

"They aren't filthy," he declared. "A hog is just as clean as you'll let him be. If you give a hog his choice between a mud wallow and a nice clean field, he'll pick the clean field every time. It isn't the hogs that want to wallow; it's the people who make them wallow. I don't believe in making hogs wallow. I am not a hog wallower."

"I don't believe you know anything about hogs," Peggy interrupted.

He stared at her resentfully. "Well," he said, brutally, "I don't think you know anything about chickens, either!"

"I've made a study of chickens for years and years," Peggy announced.

"I," he said, crushingly, "am a graduate of the agricultural school at Cornell."

Peggy McAllister, flattened to earth, rebounded lightly.

"I don't care," she said. "I am going to raise chickens and ducks here, and no one is going to raise hogs."

"I refuse to argue," the slightly intoxicated young man remarked. "I have a sore throat, and I am thirsty."

He reeled as he started around the corner of the house and made for the little lake, and Peggy, not knowing what course

to take, followed his zigzag one. She watched him kneel down and stretch himself out on a wide plank that extended like a low springboard from the bank out over the water.

He wiggled out to the end of this, and his weight slowly lowered the board until his entire face was immersed. There was nothing above water except his ears and most of his curly red hair.

Peggy thought that this was quite amusing. Evidently the young man was showing off. But, as she watched, and he did not remove his nose and mouth from the water, she wondered if he might not be committing suicide by drowning.

Then she saw, to her terror, that his two hands were paddling feebly. He was trying to push himself up, and he lacked the strength. He was too drunk to save himself! He was drowning, with only his nose and mouth under water!

Peggy seized him by the coat tail and dragged him to safety. He barked and snorted, and finally cleared the water from the passages in his head. When he was sufficiently revived to sit up, he mopped his dripping face with a handkerchief and looked at Peggy gratefully.

"Thank you for saving my life," he said. "I thought it would put the fire out, but it didn't. I'll do the same for you some time."

"It won't be necessary, thanks," Peggy asserted, stiffly. "I'll thank you now to get off my property."

He started to rise, smiled vaguely; his eyes seemed to mist over. His head sagged. He seemed to collapse. He rolled over on his back, with his nose pointing at the heavens, a smile still tugging at his lips.

Was he pretending? Was he playing 'possum?

Peggy McAllister looked at him sternly. There was something strange about this young man; there was something strange in the whole situation. Queerly, she felt that something was amiss. It was as if she could hear the beating of distant wings, of weird, unearthly music.

The young man's red curls stirred curiously in the breeze. Was he real? Was she, perhaps, suffering a little giddiness, a little light-headedness from her walk in the hot sun?

She recalled that thumping in the attic, the clanking of a chain. Was he, after all, a ghost? Never had her will leaped into

such prompt and vigorous conflict with that of another person.

His red curls tossed lightly about. His smile was that of a sleepy faun. Was he real? Her heart was beginning to thump. She reached down daringly and touched a red curl. Yes; it was hair—real hair! The man did exist in flesh and blood and bone!

The sense of queerness persisted. The oriole was still warbling in the elm tree, but its voice was a little strange. The breeze still blew through the pine or cedar thickets, and carried to her the fragrance of balsam; but it caused, or seemed to cause, a funny prickling at the roots of her hair.

Peggy McAllister tried to shake off the feeling that all things were not as they should be, but she could not rid herself of a somewhat spooky sensation. It was all so baffling, so odd—the clanking of the chain, the face at the window, the immediate clash of wills, the near drowning. It was a queer patchwork of trivial, but baffling events.

The need for haste was imperative. When the mysterious hog-loving young man awoke, he would be sober.

She scrutinized his flushed face. He was a good-looking young man, with a proud, sensitive face. Peggy started as his lips commenced to move. Words issued from them, stirring, strange words, like the words from an old, musty book.

"Pieces of eight!" he murmured. "Pieces of eight! The queen's diamond necklace!"

"What?" Peggy cried.

"Buried treasure!" he softly moaned.

"Where?" she gasped.

"The leather chest!"

Peggy withdrew in some haste. She didn't like men who were intoxicated; didn't understand them, didn't sympathize with them, didn't know how to handle them—and didn't intend to learn!

The hour of life was striking for Peggy McAllister as she raced down that green hill. The world had suddenly become mysterious and a little threatening. Invisible wings seemed to flicker about her head as she ran.

She must reach the owner of this desirable farm before the red-haired young man came to his senses.

Fate was preparing to make a ping-pong ball of Peggy McAllister.

A homing bee hummed angrily past her head as she read the name on the FOR SALE sign on the old oak tree.

## II

PEGGY McALLISTER was, to the very few who knew her well, a clever girl; but she was not a very articulate girl. That is to say, she thought a great deal, but she didn't talk much, except in terms conveying action. If the world is divided, as some people say, into two classes, the talkers and the doers, Peggy McAllister held a charter membership in the latter class.

The cruelest thing ever said of her was that she was beautiful, but didn't know how to advertise. That was downright libel. People who said that surely had never heard of the wise old owl who lived in an oak—

The more he heard, the less he spoke.  
And the less he spoke, the more he heard.  
Now wasn't he a wise old bird?

Kind people who did not know her well, but felt that some comment was called for, said that she was one of these sweet, quiet girls. Others spoke mysteriously of still waters running deep.

Young men who subscribed to the theory that the quiet ones are wilder than the noisy ones, were cruelly disappointed when they induced Peggy to visit quiet, unfrequented dark nooks. She was bound to be misunderstood. Quietly and sweetly she went her way, generally getting exactly what she wanted.

Now she wanted the farm on the hilltop. She was going to call it Hilltop House, and there would always be a pitcher of cool cider for tired, thirsty people who climbed the hill.

She entered her flivver and drove, rattling, down the dusty white road. A feeling of complete reality still evaded her. As she drove along, a mockingly smiling mouth, in a flushed face under red curls blowing in the breeze, seemed to moan at her ear:

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!" Then the refrain changed to: "The queen's diamond necklace! The queen's diamond necklace!"

"Nonsense!" Peggy said, aloud.

"The leather chest! The leather chest! The leather chest!" the red-haired ghost taunted.

"Drunken babbling," Peggy snorted.

"Buried treasure!" he chanted.

"Fiddlesticks!" Peggy retorted, and came within view of a low gray house set back from the road in a yard that flamed with nasturtiums.

"There will be acres of them at Hilltop House, ghosts or no ghosts," Peggy decided enviously.

An old man with mischievous blue eyes and a long yellowed white beard was sitting alone on the porch, rocking slowly, peacefully chewing.

He formed a toothless smile, and expertly ejected a narrow stream of brown juice into an empty red flower pot as Peggy McAllister descended from her car and approached.

"How-dee-do!" he demanded.

"Good afternoon," Peggy said, amiably. "I'm looking for the house of Horace G. Hamble. I wonder if you can direct me to it, please."

"Horace G. Hamble," the patriarch announced, "is nobody else but me, myself and I."

"Oh!" said Peggy. She had pictured some one else. She was always picturing some one else.

"Set down," Mr. Hamble suggested.

As there was only one chair on the porch, and he did not rise from that and offer it to her, Peggy McAllister drooped on the top step and mopped her fine white forehead with a tiny green handkerchief.

"Hot day," the old gentleman remarked, in the clipped speech to which he appeared addicted. "Goin' to be hotter. Goin' to be a hell-buster of a summer."

"How do you know?" Peggy asked.

"Says so in the almanac. Drouth."

"I've just been looking at that house on the hill," Peggy said. "I saw the For Sale sign on the tree, and I thought I'd ask you about it."

"Interested in buyin' it?"

"I thought I might be," she admitted cautiously.

"Purty view," he committed himself; "but it's a tough climb up that hill in the winter time. The road's wuss. I seen a car stuck down at the bottom of that hill for a whole month, one winter. Jest one sheet of glaze ice. Aimin' to use it as a summer place? Make a nice summer place. If there's a breeze anywhere, you get it on that hill."

"Aiming to raise chickens," Peggy explained casually.

Mr. Hamble considered her thoughtfully.

"Make a right good chicken farm," he presently applauded. "Used to be a right smart lot of chickens raised up there. All you have to do is give 'em a free range. Just let 'em roam. Ain't anything in this theory of keepin' chickens penned up. Let 'em range. Let 'em get plenty o' green stuff. They'll pick up plenty fruit—wind-falls—in the orchards. Good for ducks, too. Lake was built by the good Lord, special for ducks. Geese, too."

"How long has it been empty?"

"Goin' on ten years," he replied promptly, and helped himself to a level palmful of brown leaf.

"Who were the previous owners?"

"Well, my brother and his third wife was the last owners. Both under the daisies now."

"Has the farm been occupied since then?"

"Nope. I aimed to work it some, but my rheumatism kept gettin' worse and worse. I get the hay off the lower meadows. Just put the place on the market this spring. I'm gettin' old. Want to go to Californy. I got a niece in the pictures out there in Hollywood. She says she can get me granddaddy parts to play. I'm aimin' to reap a fortune. Ten bucks a day they pay for granddaddy parts. Ma, she's fixin' to play grandma parts. We can make twenty bucks a day betwixt us, and have our own house and orange grove."

Peggy McAllister smiled at the garrulous old man. She was wondering what price he would put on that heavenly farm.

"How many acres are there?"

"A hundred and six, and a good half is good tillable land. What ain't is mostly woods, soft and hard—pine, oak, maple, elm, hickory."

A figure took form in Peggy McAllister's mind—ten thousand dollars. The hilltop farm was worth every dollar of it.

"Has—has that house up there ever had a reputation for being haunted?" she wanted to know.

Horace G. Hamble stared at her. He shifted his cud from one cheek to the other.

"Haunted?" he echoed. "That farm? Now, what put such an idee into your little head? Of course it ain't haunted. Land o' livin'! Some ignorant folks put ghosts into a house soon's it's been empty a month. Why should it be haunted? Ain't never been any murders up there. My



brother Zeke lived there goin' on thirty years, till he died. If he'd seen ghosts, I calculate I'd 've heard about 'em."

"Who lived there before your brother?"

"He bought the farm off a man named Hopkins. The Hopkinses wuz a shiftless lot. Let the house go. Let the land go. Old man Marple foreclosed on 'em finally, and Zeke bought the place off of old man Marple."

"What other owners have there been?"

"Now, lemme see," the old gentleman said. "My memory ain't as clear as it used to be, but as I recollect hearin' my grandpop tellin' me, the house was built along about the time of Captain Kidd. That makes the house purty old, don't it, young woman?"

Peggy McAllister nodded, and fixed her sparkling dark eyes on his misty blue ones.

"Why do you fix the date that way?" she asked.

"Well," Mr. Hamble replied, "my grandpap used to tell a queer story about that place. From where it sits you can get a view of Long Island Sound on clear days, and it's the only place this far back from the Sound that has any view of it."

"They say the feller who built it was one of Captain Kidd's pirates, and the way the story came to me, this pirate skipped the ship and built himself that house on the hilltop, so he could see salt water when he hankered to, but couldn't be seen from salt water himself. Must 'a' been a purty bad actor. Pirate!"

"They say he used to lug a big brass telescope up into the attic and look hour after hour at the salt water. Homesick for the old life, maybe."

"This country's plumb full of stories about that pirate, but you don't hear 'em so often any more. They say he escaped from Captain Kidd's ship with a lot o' plunder, too, but I've heard too many of them buried treasure stories to take stock in 'em any more. I spent half my life as a youngster huntin' fer a brass-bound chest that was supposed to be chock full o' doubloons."

"They said it was buried down by the south end of the stone wall in the east forty. I must of excavated enough ground to drop the Woolworth Building in, and all I found was a handful of chicken bones. Them old pirates spent their treasure on high times and low women when they had it, ma'am."

"Well, anyhow, that pirate settled there and built himself a stout little house, and by and by he married the gal on the next farm. His name was Godfrey Jouvard, and that pirate was certainly prolific, ma'am! His descendants are scattered far and wide, and most of them, from what I gather, didn't come to no good end."

"I s'pose the land was in his family for a hundred years, then it changed hands, and it's been changin' from hand to hand ever since. People just seemed to pop in there, stay a bit, and pop right out. My brother Zeke was there only a matter of thirty years, and—pop!—off he went like the rest of 'em."

"Just transients," Peggy remarked, dryly.

"That's all, ma'am, just transients. Here to-day and gone to-morrow! They say there was a duel fought up there once, between this Red Jouvard and another pirate, who found his trail and followed him years later."

"Red?" Peggy gasped.

"Yep. They called him Red Jouvard, on account of his red hair. The old timers could tell you more, but they're all gone, and history ain't passed from mouth to ear like it was in the days afore radio and fast trains and all these other blessin's."

Peggy McAllister felt a little dazed. Had she interviewed the slightly intoxicated ghost of the red-haired pirate?

"That place of Zeke's will make a good farm for somebody who ain't afraid to break out into a good old-fashioned sweat once in awhile," Mr. Hamble proceeded. "The old farms are sellin' off purty fast nowadays. It takes an old-fashioned kind of man, and an even more old-fashioned kind of girl, to settle down to farm life now. Too many attractions in the city."

"Mebbe you don't know it, but people never did buy farms to make fortunes out of. They bought 'em because they wanted to put down roots themselves. They wanted a livin' and security and a place of their own."

"Nowadays, people don't want to put down roots. They want to be on the go. They're afraid a leetle dust might settle on 'em."

"What was it my niece out in Hollywood said in her last letter? 'Snap a hoof, Uncle Horace.' That's about all that's goin' on, looks like to me. Everybody too busy hoof-snappin' to settle down."



"I got the disease myself. Soon as we get these two places off our hands, this farm and Zeke's, ma and me are goin' to load our pussonal belongin's in th' flivver and hit th' old trail."

"How much do you want for the hilltop place?" Peggy interrupted his oratory.

"It would all depend," the old man said, affably. "If you was to want it for a summer place, to come out week-ends and use for gin-drinkin' and general hell-raisin', the way most of you city folks do, I'd soak you good and hard. But if you was to convince me that you was one of these fast-disappearin' old-fashioned gals, who wanted to put down roots and live right down close to the soil and rear up a family of little ones, I might make a nice dicker with you. Just what was your intentions, ma'am?"

"My father and I want to own a farm, and to raise chickens and ducks," Peggy lied promptly.

"You married?"

"No, Mr. Hamble."

He cocked a shrewd eye at her. "Ought to be. A fine lookin' gal like you! If I was a young man I'd snap you up in a minute."

"Maybe I don't want to be snapped up just yet."

"How old are you?" Mr. Hamble asked, with old-fashioned indelicacy.

"Twenty-one."

"Shucks! Time you'd had two or three leetle ones. But I like your looks, Miss—"

"McAllister," Peggy supplied.

"Miss McAllister, I like your looks. You look to me like a good, capable girl; and, if you'll give me your word you ain't aimin' to use that place for gin-drinkin' jamborees, I'll let it go to you right reasonable. The price for that farm for gin-drinkin', week-endin' folks is eight thousand bucks. Fer anybody who wants to put down roots and live in plain eyesight of God Almighty, the price is jest half."

"Four thousand?" Peggy inquired, trying her best to conceal her astonishment.

"Four thousand bucks," the old gentleman affirmed.

"Terms?"

"Oh, shucks, I'll be reasonable. If you want to plunk down twenty-five bucks fer an option, I'll give you thirty days."

"I don't want an option," Peggy said. "I want outright ownership. Let me give you the twenty-five as a binder. Draw up

a rough contract form; one thousand payable at the end of thirty days, the rest to be carried on mortgage."

"You want to amortize it?"

"Yes, sir; we'll pay off two hundred and fifty a year."

"If it was anybody in the world but a nice old-fashioned girl like you, I'd say nothin' doin'," Mr. Hamble said. "Those terms of yours are downright outrageous, but I admire your sperrit, Miss McAllister. You got cash for the deposit?"

"I'll give you my check. And that's going to be a six per cent mortgage, Mr. Hamble."

He agreed to this. Peggy wrote out a check, and he withdrew to write her receipt of the binder.

When Peggy started for home, evening had come. A cool, sleepy breeze now blew down the valley, and overhead a thin shav- ing of moon grew brighter.

Peggy drove slowly. The cobalt blue of the afternoon sky had given way to the purple of dusk. To her, this was the most enchanting hour of the day. The countryside was at peace.

The air grew cooler. In the distance, the darkness was starred by the lights of village windows.

She was exhausted by the day's activities. Why had she written that binder check?

When she left Mill City that morning she had no intention of buying a farm. She had only wanted to shake the dust of the city from her heels, to see green things and blue sky—lots of blue sky. What would her father say?

Words attacked her tired brain.

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"

She uttered a little snort of anger. Why did those absurd words beat in her brain?

"The queen's diamond necklace! The queen's diamond necklace! The queen's diamond necklace!"

"Oh, shut up!" Peggy growled.

"The leather chest! The leather chest!" that maddening voice chanted.

She jammed on her brakes sharply. A tall gray figure appeared in the darkness, just out of range of her bleary headlights at the right side of the road. It had seemed to take form from a handful of shadows.

He lurched into the path of the headlights, flinging out an arm in a loose gesture that was strangely accusing.

"Hold!" he cried in a shockingly harsh voice, above the rattle of her engine.

Cold perspiration broke out on Peggy's brow.

The tall young man plunged toward the car. His red hair was standing out in all directions. His eyes seemed to be ablaze.

Peggy put the car into reverse. She was frightened. A drunken young man in the daytime and a drunken young man after dark are two entirely different animals.

As he staggered and reeled toward her, his legs seemed to crumple under him. He collapsed as she had seen men collapse in the movies when they are shot down from behind.

He fell headlong in the dust, effectively blocking the road to Mill City.

### III

For some seconds Peggy did not move, but sat staring through the dusty windshield at the long dark form of the young man lying in the path of her headlights, her heart thumping, little icy flashes trickling the length of her spine, her forehead accumulating a layer of cold moisture.

She had heard of bandits executing hold-ups in this fashion—playing 'possum, pretending they were sick or hurt to gain the temporary sympathy of the unsuspecting motorist victim.

The young man's curly red hair stirred faintly in the breeze. He was lying face down, perfectly still.

Peggy blew her horn experimentally. He did not move.

Her anger arose. She was tired of this young man's pranks. What, she wondered, was his game?

She knew that a man in a state of intoxication did not act the way this young man was acting. They did not stay drunk for hours; either they sobered up or they passed out completely. This was the second time this young man had passed out completely.

Suspiciously, she regarded him. Evidently he had no intention of removing himself from the dust. He had cleverly flung himself across the road so that she could not pass on either side, because of a deep ditch in which water trickled.

She must remove him from the road. She must drag him out of the way. But supposing he menaced her when she alighted from the flivver?

Peggy prepared for this contingency by

arming herself with a long, heavy wrench. She gripped it firmly in her hand, and carefully let herself out of the car, not taking her gaze from him a moment.

He did not move as she approached.

"Get up!" she commanded in a scared, shrill voice.

"Doubloons!" he groaned.

"Stop this nonsense," she cried, "and get out of this road! If you want to sleep it off, don't pick a public highway. Park yourself under that tree. Kindly remove yourself from this road!"

"Pieces of eight!" his muttered reply came.

"Are you going to get off this road, or shall I drag you off?" she demanded.

"The queen's diamond necklace!" he moaned.

"Darn it!" Peggy snapped, and reached down for his hand.

The wrench slipped from her free hand as her fingers closed about the man's. She quickly knelt in the white dust beside him. She turned his head until one ear was uppermost, and placed her hand on his forehead. It was dry and hot—burning hot!

"Good Lord!" Peggy exclaimed.

Now she secured his hand again and felt for the pulse in his wrist. It was throbbing away at a terrible rate.

"He must be dying!" she groaned.

"What an idiot I was not to guess it before!

"Here!" she cried. "Try to stand up. You've got to get in this car, buddy."

"Doubloons!" he retorted.

"I know, I know," she said, with a little catch in her voice. "The place is just crawling with doubloons and pieces of eight, but you've got to get into my car."

She rolled him over on his back. His eyes were now mere slits, glinting greasily in the headlights of the flivver. Peggy dragged him to a sitting position, and tried to lift him to his feet. She wasn't strong enough.

She put her lips to his ear.

"You've got to stand up!" she shouted.

"Come on, buddy! Bear a hand!"

A tremor passed through him. The command had penetrated his inflamed brain, and he was trying to put it into execution. He got to his knees, and she threw a supporting arm around him. Tottering, he came to his feet.

"Sixteen men on a dead man's chest!" he announced.

"Walk!" she commanded.

He staggered forward, leaning on her heavily.

"You won't leave me again, will you?" he whimpered.

"No! No! I won't leave you!"

"We—we've got to find that leather chest."

"Yes," she agreed, wildly, "and we'll find it. Don't you worry about that old chest. We'll find it. Climb into this car!"

"But the leather chest—"

"We'll come back for it!"

"It's full of doubloons and pieces of eight. We'll be rich. We'll raise hogs—big, fine Berkshires."

"Yes," she panted. "Come on, now, buddy. Try hard. Heave! That's right."

"Hogs," he muttered. "Nice white Berkshires. Better than chickens."

"Much better," Peggy agreed. "Cleaner by far."

"She said hogs are filthy. They aren't. Hogs don't wallow. It's people that make them wallow. People! Give me a nice white Berkshire every time!"

He was going into the front seat an inch at a time. Peggy was pushing from behind. Some reserve of energy was suddenly tapped, and he climbed into the seat, sat down, and dropped his head to his two hands.

Peggy slammed the door, ran around to the other side, and climbed in. He must be dreadfully ill. Wandering around under that hot sun all afternoon without a hat! His temperature must be more than a hundred and five!

"Don't leave me!" he said suddenly.

"I'm right here," she comforted him, and eased in the forward speeds. The flivver rattled along.

"I've been looking for you all afternoon," the young man muttered. "I've been looking everywhere for you. What did you run away for?"

Peggy didn't answer. The young man sagged. His head came to rest on her shoulder, and his cheek was hot through the thin material of her dress.

"Where do you live?" she asked him.

"I don't live anywhere. I used to live in Mill City, but they kicked me out. They kicked me out. What do you think of that?"

"Who kicked you out?"

"Mrs. Plunkett."

"Who is Mrs. Plunkett?"

"She runs the boarding house. I couldn't pay my rent. She kicked me out. Don't leave me again, will you?"

"No, I won't leave you again. But where am I going to take you? Have you any relatives in Mill City?"

"No, I haven't any relatives anywhere." His voice had become thick and drowsy again. Peggy accelerated the car. They flew through the night. Mill City was ten miles away.

"She said, 'If you can't pay your room rent, get out.' So I got out. I was broke. I lost my job a week ago. It's a tough world, isn't it?"

"Mighty tough," Peggy said. "What's your name?"

"Jouvard," he said.

Was he babbling again? Had he been babbling all the time?

"Jouvard?" she repeated. "Red Jouvard, the pirate?"

"Yes, Red Jouvard, the pirate."

"You're one of Captain Kidd's men?"

"Yes. I quit the ship. He was going to have me flogged. No man can flog Red Jouvard. I got away with that chest. It's a leather chest. It's full of golden doubloons and silver pieces of eight. And there's a diamond necklace in it belonging to Queen Isabella, of Spain. It's worth a lot of money, that necklace. Where did we put the chest?"

"We'll find it all right," Peggy said.

"We hid it so that Captain Kidd and the other pirates couldn't find it."

"Are you sure Captain Kidd won't find it? You know, he's a devil, that man. He's worse than Blackbeard or Captain Morgan. He'll swing some day. He'll swing from a yardarm, mark my word! Say, who are you, anyhow?"

"Just a friend," Peggy replied. She felt very much like crying. Out of a job; broke; kicked out of his boarding house; no friends to turn to; sick—maybe dying! And such a nice looking young man!

She felt guilty for not having diagnosed earlier in the day that his strange behavior was caused, not by drink, but by a raging fever. She was maternally sorry for him. Poor kid! No money meant no private room in the hospital. It seemed a shame for him to go into a public ward, especially when there was that spare bedroom at home.

She decided to talk it over with her father.

"Where are we going?" the young man muttered.

"Home," Peggy replied.

"It has such a nice view. You never get tired looking out over those hills," he said. "You'll never run away from me again, will you?"

"No," Peggy answered, and wondered who, in his delirium, he thought she was. She put it into a question: "Do you know who I am?"

"Yes," he said. "A friend."

And he said no more. His head on her shoulder grew heavy, and Peggy, with a firm grip on the wheel, drove as she had never driven before. It was, perhaps, a race between life and death.

He might be dead before she reached Mill City! A man with a fever so high and a pulse so rapid could not, she knew, live very long.

They were passing through the outlying districts of Mill City now, breaking all speed laws. And presently the old rattletrap of a flivver pulled up and stopped before the garish yellow brick apartment building where Peggy McAllister lived.

Delirious blue eyes tried to focus on her face as she climbed down. She had never, in all her life, seen a man who looked so dreadfully sick.

"I'll be right back," she promised, and flew into the foyer and up the stairs.

The McAllister apartment was on the second floor. It was one of these narrow-chested apartments, with a long hall running from one end to the other—a long hallway of doors; first a bedroom, next a bedroom, next a bedroom, then the kitchen, and, at a small L at the end, the dining room and living room.

Peggy let herself in and called: "Dad!"

There was no answer. Her father, she supposed, had gone to the movies. She returned to the street.

At the front door of the apartment building, she stopped and stared. The flivver was empty. Quite in keeping with his character, the young man of the hilltop had vanished.

Peggy looked up and down the street. Pedestrians were in sight, but there was no sign of a tall young man with red hair.

"Have I," Peggy wondered, "been dreaming all this? It's altogether too amazing and mysterious. Well, I'm through."

Yes, she was through. She had been

perfectly willing to extend the hand of a Good Samaritan to this feverish, strange young man. She had done her best. She was through.

She returned to her apartment, and stopped just inside the door. A voice was chanting:

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"

"I'm going crazy," Peggy said aloud.

"I'm being followed by a ghost!"

"The queen's diamond necklace!" gurgled the haunting voice.

"A good night's sleep," Peggy comforted herself, "will clear all these funny noises out of my head."

"The leather chest!" the spectral voice moaned.

Peggy strode into the first of the three bedrooms. She switched on the light.

Her red-haired ghost was lying on his back on the bed, his eyes gleaming through slits, his lips parted, those moldy words of an old century issuing from them.

He opened his eyes at sight of her.

"How did you get up here?" she demanded severely.

"Don't leave me," the young man pleaded.

#### IV

DR. WILBUR FERGUSON, who lived on the ground floor, put away his watch and screwed his thermometer into its little black containing tube. He looked up at the anxiously hovering Peggy.

"Scarlet fever," he pronounced, "and a bad throat. He's a mighty sick man, Miss McAllister, but he'll pull through."

"Quarantined!" Peggy exclaimed.

"Only four weeks," the doctor said. "There's a good deal of this infection going around. I've got twenty adult cases of scarlet fever. Don't feed him anything. Give him all the water he can drink, and you might put an ice bag on his throat."

"Can—can he be moved to a hospital?" Peggy demanded.

Dr. Ferguson shook his head. "Too late now," he said. "I'll have to notify the health officer. You can quarantine this room—won't be necessary to quarantine the whole apartment. Friend of yours?"

"She's an angel from heaven!" quoth the young man in bed.

"I see," Dr. Ferguson remarked.

"Look here—" Peggy sputtered, suddenly rosy.



"I'll be in in the morning," the doctor said, and withdrew.

Peggy's father returned from the picture show an hour later, and found her adjusting a new ice pack to the throat of the delirious, mysterious, red-haired stranger, who was passionately informing his volunteer nurse:

"Pigs are cleaner than cats."

"To make a long story extremely short and funny," Peggy said, meeting her father's protruding eyes, "I haven't the slightest notion who in the world he is. I found him wandering about on a hill this morning a few miles the other side of Redfern Junction. I thought he was tight. To-night I almost ran over him in the road. An inescapable destiny seems to fling us together. He has scarlet fever, and will have to stay here a whole month."

"It doesn't seem to make sense," Mr. McAllister declared.

"It doesn't to me, either," Peggy agreed. "I went out into the country this morning, as you know, to have a little holiday all by myself, and—"

"Pieces of eight! Doubloons! The leather chest!" the ghost of Red Jouvard muttered.

"What's he saying?" Mr. McAllister gasped.

"It's what he's been chanting all day long," Peggy explained. "He's got an idea into his poor old befuddled head that he's looking for buried treasure, and he can't get it out. He's lost his job, he's broke, he's been kicked out of his boarding house, and he hasn't any friends. I brought him home, before taking him to the hospital, to see what you thought, and he must have followed me upstairs from the car. Then I called Dr. Ferguson; he says it's scarlet fever, and that the patient 'll have to stay here in quarantine."

"Who is he?"

"He says his name is Godfrey Jouvard. He's just raving. Godfrey Jouvard was a pirate, who built the house on the hilltop about a mile beyond Redfern Junction about two hundred years ago, that I've just bought because he said he was going to raise hogs there."

Mr. McAllister sat down rather heavily, and stared glassily at his beautiful dark-eyed daughter. The color of excitement still enhanced the loveliness of her face.

"Peggy," he panted, "are you sure you haven't a temperature yourself?"

Peggy told him the story of her exciting day in the country, beginning with her climb to the top of the enchanting hill, and ending with that mad ride back to Mill City.

"You've always wanted to live in the country," she concluded, "and so have I. The farm is worth at least double what he asked for it. You can sell the peanut business, and we'll scrape together all we have and go back to nature. I think it's a grand idea. We might even take this young fellow along, and, when he's well, he can work for us. He's a graduate of the Cornell Agricultural School, and he ought to be a wonder."

Mr. McAllister looked at her with a curious smile.

"My dear child," he said, "the hand of an all wise Providence is plainly apparent in what has happened to-day. The unseen hand of fate has been guiding us both. Darling, what will you say when I tell you that I *have* sold the peanut business?"

"Dad!" Peggy cried.

"Peanuts," the young man in bed said, in a convincing tone, "are without an equal for fattening hogs."

Colton McAllister's peanut enterprise was the last of a long line of business misadventures into which that unfortunate man had fallen since the death of his father, some fifteen years ago, and his inheritance of a cash sum of twenty-five thousand dollars. Colton McAllister was a large, upstanding, gray-haired, distinguished-looking failure.

He was the portrait of an affluent American business man, and he had yet to turn a penny in any business enterprise he entered. Each of his forays into the marts of trade had promised fortunes; each, in turn, had been another bitter experience, another failure.

The peanut business was characteristic of them all. The "factory" was a loft of a down town building, where clever machines received whole peanuts, hulled them, skinned them, blanched them, boiled them in oil, salted them, and wrapped them deftly in small waxed-paper packages, labeled: MCALLISTER'S TITANIC PEANUTS — THEY PLEASE THE PALATE—5C.

This peanut factory had been a money paying business when Mr. McAllister took it over, but misfortune attended him from the beginning. Peanuts spoiled mysteriously in transit from the Virginia planta-



tions. Then the trust began to persecute him. And in no time at all the McAllister Peanut Corporation became just another white elephant.

"How much will you get out of it?" the practical Peggy wanted to know.

"I engineered it mighty cleverly," her father evaded. "I won't owe a dime, not a dime!"

"How much did you get—in cash?" she demanded.

Mr. McAllister fidgeted in his chair.

"They assumed every dollar of my debts—almost five thousand dollars," he said. "I won't have to go into bankruptcy this time. I consider it a very clever deal on my part. I won't owe a soul a dime—not a dime."

"You said that before," Peggy reminded him. "What you mean is that you are walking out of the peanut factory and somebody else is holding the bag?"

"I suppose you might put it that way," her father agreed with a sly smile. "It's something that never happened to me before—closing out a business without a lot of debts to pay off. Thank God, I'm out of it! McVane and Halliday are two mighty shrewd young fellows. If they can make a go of it, they have my blessings. Personally, I don't think there is anything in peanuts. And it's a queer thing, honey. All afternoon, ever since the deal was closed, I've been thinking how wonderful it would be if we could cut away from the smoke and the grime of this rotten mill town and get out into God's glorious outdoors. It almost looks as if you had heard what was in my mind, by telepathy."

"It would," Peggy murmured, but in a voice so low that he did not hear.

"You know, I'm no good at business," he continued, gathering enthusiasm as he went along. "I would have gone on a farm years ago if your mother—God bless her memory!—hadn't opposed me. She hated the country, and I've always wanted a farm. There's big money in chickens and ducks. Honey, it's a sound idea. It's the best idea we've had in ages."

"How do we stand financially?" Peggy asked.

"You say you've checked twenty-five out of our account as a binder? We have a balance in the bank of about five hundred dollars."

"How are we going to raise the thousand that is due a month from now?"

"We will find a way," her optimistic father declared. "Peggy, I have the feeling that our luck has turned at last! I'll go out and look the farm over in the morning. I don't know what I'd do without you, my dear. You are a great help to your father. Indeed you are! So I'm a landowner at last!"

Peggy smiled tolerantly. It was always this way. He didn't do it maliciously; he simply took any idea that she passed along, and a little later, with childlike innocence, he would proclaim it as his very own.

It would be the same with the hilltop farm. And he would tackle the problem of raising chickens and living in the country with the same enthusiasm that he engendered for every new venture.

Peggy left the room for a glass of water for her patient, and when she returned her father was hunched over in his chair, eagerly perusing some papers that he held in his hand.

"Peggy," he announced excitedly, "this boy's name is Jouvard!"

"No!" Peggy gasped.

"Yes!" her father exclaimed. "Daniel Jouvard. Here's an envelope with his address on it—from the Cornell agricultural correspondence school. He's been taking a correspondence course in hog raising. It says here that hogs are naturally very clean animals, and that there's big money in raising them."

Eagerly he thumbed through the other papers he had removed from Daniel Jouvard's inner coat pocket.

"I don't think you ought to go through his papers, dad," Peggy protested.

"Why not? We want to find out who he is, don't we?"

He opened an envelope and drew out a folded sheet of paper that was brittle and yellow with age. He frowned as he read the lines. And suddenly he sprang up.

"Peggy!" he cried. "Look at this! It's an old letter, dated Redfern Town, July 8, 1766. It's signed Emanuel Jouvard, and it's directed to 'My dear brother.' Peggy! There is buried treasure on our farm!"

"What does it say?" she demanded.

Colton McAllister read:

"I have looked everywhere for the chest, but I cannot find it. It is a leathern chest, bound in brass. On his deathbed, father tried to tell me where he had hidden it, but his last breath went before the words

could form upon his lips. There were two chests, one full of doubloons and pieces of eight. This he used. The other chest, far more valuable, is full, he claimed, of double doubloons, single doubloons, and, at the bottom, in a silver casket, is a diamond necklace set in a filigree of gold that was on its way to Queen Isabella on a Spanish merchantman. I will continue my search for it. Another hog, alas, has died."

Mr. McAllister looked up triumphantly from the faded ink. His eyes were sparkling with excitement.

"Darling, if we can find that chest, we're rich!" he declared.

Peggy sighed. It was what her father had been doing all of his life—hunting for buried treasures—and never finding them. The peanut factory had, in the beginning, been a buried treasure, too. She was sorry he had found that letter. Now, instead of working on the farm, he would spend his time digging behind stone walls or tearing the house to pieces. She recalled the cynical observations of Horace G. Hamble:

"I've heard too many of them buried treasure stories to take stock in 'em any more. I spent half my life as a youngster huntin' fer a brass-bound chest that was supposed to be full o' doubloons. I must of excavated enough ground to drop the Woolworth Building in, and all I found was a handful of chicken bones."

"I wouldn't waste much sleep over that leather chest," Peggy said. "In the first place, how do you know Emanuel Jouvard didn't find it and spend it? And if he didn't find it, how do you know that some one didn't find it later on? And in the second place, even if you should find it, it wouldn't rightfully be ours."

"I'd like to know why not. We own the property, don't we?"

"Legally or technically, we do, dear; but, if that chest is found, it seems to me that it belongs to this young man."

"There's a woman for you!" her father cried. "Legally we do own that farm. You bet we do! We paid twenty-five dollars down for a binder, didn't we? We're going to pay off the rest of it, aren't we? That chest is ours! I wonder how much it's worth. I wonder what a doubloon looks like. I'll bet that diamond necklace is worth a fortune!"

Peggy glanced from her father to Daniel Jouvard. The young man was lying with his head on the pillow toward her, his

hand caught under his cheek, in the attitude of a sleeping child. His face was pinkly flushed. His red hair was tousled.

Peggy suddenly felt sorry for both of these two small boys. That was all they were—both dreaming a childhood dream. Buried treasure! Pots of gold at the foot of the rainbow!

"I'm going to start out there first thing in the morning," Colton McAllister announced firmly.

"You might as well," she agreed. "We ought to know just how much it will cost to put that house into livable condition. I think the roof leaks. The place hasn't been lived in for years. Stop and have a talk with Mr. Hamble about chickens. I'm still undecided whether we ought to stock plymouth rocks or leghorns."

"That's true," he said vaguely. "I'll look into that, too."

But Peggy knew that he wasn't aware of a word she had said. His mind was on leathern chests. He replaced the papers in the pocket of their guest's coat and retired to his room. He undressed and went to bed, but he could not sleep.

The lust of the gold hunt was upon Colton McAllister. He had been a broken, ruined man only a few hours ago. Now fortune was smiling again, a golden smile—and her lips were a diamond necklace. He would, he *must*, find that chest of precious coins and gems. Toward dawn he fell asleep to the soft clink and the golden sheen of double doubloons.

## V

It was hardly sunup when Mr. McAllister, his mind a human mint, awoke, quietly dressed, and tiptoed out of the house and to what adventure the glorious summer morning might afford.

Perhaps an hour later, with the sun streaming through the window, his daughter awoke. She had fallen asleep, fully dressed, in a chair beside Daniel Jouvard's bed. And when she opened her eyes, he, also, was awake.

The young man was sitting up in bed, staring at her. His face was no longer flushed, but pale and moist. Sometime during the night his fever had gone, and his eyes now had that lustrous clarity often seen in the eyes of patients after their fever has departed.

"Oh!" Peggy gasped, rubbing her eyes and giving him a wan, sleepy smile.

His eyes were not friendly. He did not smile.

"What am I doing here?" he demanded sternly.

"Why—don't you remember? You were sick. I brought you here."

Daniel Jouvard shook his red curls.

"No, I don't remember," he replied coldly. "The last I remember is meeting you on the farm I'm going to buy. The farm I'm going to buy and raise hogs on."

"All that is in the past," Peggy said. "I bought the farm to raise chickens on."

Daniel Jouvard sank back on the pillow.

"You didn't!" he groaned.

"I'm sorry," Peggy said. "I'm sorry that your heart is so set on hogs. Can't you raise hogs somewhere else?"

"It wasn't the hogs so much," he confessed. "You see, that farmhouse was built two hundred years ago by an ancestor of mine. I only learned lately that he was my ancestor, and I learned later still that the place was on the market."

"Were you really intending to raise hogs on that farm," Peggy asked, "or were you going to fritter away your time hunting for a leather chest full of doubloons and pieces of eight and diamond necklaces?"

He stared at her, sternly, inquiringly.

"You've read that letter!" he accused her.

"No," Peggy said. "My father read the letter—"

"And he has gone to find my treasure!"

"He is going to look the farm over this morning."

"I see it all," the young man groaned.

"You're holding me here, a prisoner, while your father looks for that treasure!"

"Wrong again," Peggy said, sweetly.

"The board of health is holding you here a prisoner. You are in quarantine."

"Good Lord! What have I got?"

He stared, blinked, and shook his head incredulously when she told him. He had an awfully nice nose, Peggy thought.

"But that's a childhood disease."

"Well," she said, impertinently, "aren't you a child? Don't you think it's rather childish to go chasing off after a treasure chest that was very probably, oh, unquestionably, found by Emanuel Jouvard—the man who wrote that letter? Don't you think it's rather childish to chase pots of gold at the end of rainbows when there's work to be done in this world—hogs to be raised, for instance?"

And when he did not reply, she went on rallying:

"Besides, how did you intend to buy the farm? Last night you told me you had lost your job, were broke, and had been kicked out of your boarding house. You also said you were Red Jouvard, a pirate, closely associated with Captain Kidd. Well, what was true, and what wasn't?"

The young man was flushed, but whether from shame or because of indignation, Peggy did not at once discover. He was avoiding her eyes. His nice, clean-cut chin seemed to sag.

"It's true. I was just chasing rainbows. I haven't any more of an idea that that chest is out there than—than you have. Yes, I'm broke, and out of a job, and my boarding house landlady kicked me out and grabbed everything I had but the clothes on my back. That house up there had been empty for ten years. I was sure the chest was there. And you—came butting in. I was going to take plenty of time and live on fruits and things, and spend the rest of the summer looking for that chest. Oh, well, life always consists of something different, doesn't it? How long am I going to be penned up?"

"A month, Mr. Jouvard."

"Oh, Lord," he groaned. "Where am I? A month!"

"This is my apartment—mine and my father's."

"And you're going to move out to the farm?"

"We are—as soon as we can."

He sighed, and looked desolated.

"I was wondering," Peggy said, timidly, "as long as you are broke and out of a job, and so on, if you wouldn't like to go out to the farm with us. You look like a strong, husky sort of fellow. It would be pretty poor picking for all of us at first; but if you wanted to pitch in and help, why, you would be sure of three meals a day, anyhow—"

"And I'd be a nursemaid, or a governess, or something like that, to a flock of buff orpingtons?"

"White plymouth rocks," Peggy corrected him.

"I might go so far," she added, generously, "as to let you raise a few hogs. I've been thinking it over, and I read that lesson from the Cornell correspondence school that is in your pocket. There seems to be good money in hogs."

"There is!" he exclaimed, with all the enthusiasm of a zealot. "There's big money in hogs. And they're the cleanest animal in the world. You know, hogs don't wallow in mud from choice. It's the people who own 'em who make 'em wallow."

"You told me all that yesterday," Peggy said.

"I think I'd like to take you up on that proposition," Daniel Jouvard remarked, dreamily.

"You aren't fooling me for a minute," Peggy declared. "You want to get out there—oh, you're just itching to get out there and continue your treasure hunt. You and my father will make a dandy team! Every time a rainbow pops into the sky, I'll have to lock both of you up in the box stall!"

The young man smiled. He had a charming smile. It seemed to light up his whole face, and he had really fine teeth. Peggy was beginning to like him immensely, in spite of his predilections toward hogs and double doubloons.

"No," he disagreed, "I'm not thinking of that leather chest entirely. That place gave me an awful kick yesterday. It seems to me I've been dreaming about that hill-top farm all my life—the view, and that little lake, and that clump of cedars off there to the left of the porch. A man could love that place."

"So could a woman," Peggy said.

"It would be great fun to put it in shape," he declared, enthusiastically. "I'd tear all that old paper off the walls, to begin with, and I'd paint the walls a pale cream, just off white."

"Yes," Peggy agreed, eagerly, "and I'd take out all those little windows and put in big ones."

"With small square panes!" he exclaimed. "And you know that little bedroom upstairs, just above the kitchen? Well, I'd certainly change that into a bathroom. Of course, you'd have to put in one of these farm electric lighting plants, and you might want to drill an artesian well. Gee, but couldn't you have a lot of fun restoring that old place and putting in modern improvements?"

"Gee! Couldn't you!" Peggy gurgled.

Their eyes met, sparkled, and became instantly thoughtful. A faint color tinted Peggy's cheeks. Daniel Jouvard had become slightly red, too.

"Will your father object?" he asked.

"Heavens, no; he'll adore having you around! You've taken a correspondence course from Cornell, and he thinks that's wonderful. It's too bad we're all so broke. It would be nice if we could go in there with lots of money to do things with. You want to do everything at once. Gee, but we'll have to work!"

"It would be great," he said dreamily, "if we would happen to stumble on that chest full of doubloons. That would finance everything. Of course, it's yours if it's ever found. I mean, treasure like that belongs to the person who owns the property."

"We wouldn't be stingy," Peggy declared. "Gracious! Wouldn't it be wonderful if we did find it! What kind of hogs would you buy?"

"White Berkshires," the youthful hog fancier said, without an instant's hesitation. "They're cleaner than white cats. And the little piglets—say, they're the cutest things you ever saw! It's a shame to kill them!"

"The poor darlings," Peggy murmured.

Daniel Jouvard looked at her with honest, manly admiration.

"I'm certainly glad you found me," he said, fervently. "Scarlet fever isn't so bad, after all. In fact, I rather like it."

## VI

COLTON McALLISTER had had no thoughts for breakfast. His thoughts soared far above such mundane things as coffee and three-minute eggs. Everything he saw was gold. The day was golden. The sun was golden. A fine gold mist seemed to sift down from the cobalt sky.

He passed wheat fields full of gold. He passed a patch of early goldenrod. The sun shining on his radiator turned it into pure gold. The sun shining on the white road turned it into a path of gold.

He drove recklessly. By nature an eccentric man, Colton McAllister drove a car eccentrically. He was always having hairbreadth escapes. He was always forcing his luck by passing a car ahead on a blind curve or a blind hill. He was forever taking chances. But this morning he would have beaten the Twentieth Century Limited, doing its best, at a crossing.

He found the farm without difficulty, and, with beads of the sweat of excitement gleaming—yes, like drops of gold on his forehead—he climbed the hill to Hilltop



House. Not one glance did he waste on that enchanting view across the misty hills and valleys, yet this morning, if he had but looked, he would have seen Long Island Sound. It was a golden sea this morning—a fairy sea in a book of nursery rimes.

Nor did he waste his glances ascertaining just what practical advantages this farm of his possessed for poultry culture. The fate that had been working so industriously in his behalf since yesterday noon drew his steps magnetically toward the house, and on into the house.

He began with the old stone-and-dirt cellar. He found a bar of iron, and he had providentially brought along an electric flash light. With the light in one hand, the bar in the other, he investigated the cellar.

Treasure chests, as he recalled, were generally buried in cellars, in the event of the house burning down. But his soundings brought forth no hollow sounds.

He returned to the main floor, and he spent the better part of the morning tapping the walls. Then he explored the second floor, and tapped more walls.

It must have been almost noon when an irresistible force drew him toward the attic. Forever afterward he would claim that it was an irresistible force.

"Something seemed to be plucking at my sleeve, like a ghostly hand," he would say, "and a voice seemed to be whispering to me: 'You're wasting your time! Go to the attic!'"

Anyhow, hand or no hand, voice or no voice, and all skepticism bearing upon irresistible forces notwithstanding, Mr. McAllister, with perspiration oozing from his every pore, climbed the narrow, steep stairway into the attic.

My, but it was hot up there! And spooky! You know how those old attics are—full of dust and cobwebs, and queer-shaped objects left by a succession of former tenants; tops of trunks, parts of an old spinning wheel, discarded toys, piles of rags, and a litter of sticks. A long pile of rags looked suspiciously like a corpse. A chill trickled up and down Mr. McAllister's backbone.

When his eyes grew accustomed to the dim gray light that sifted into the round front window—the window where Red Jouvard so often, according to tradition, planted his big brass telescope, and stared—with what memories?—at that tiny dis-

tant patch of salt water— Well, when his eyes grew accustomed to that light, he saw, lying almost at his feet, an old crowbar and a pile of heavy chain.

It was this chain that Peggy had heard clanking above her yesterday morning, and it was this crowbar, its dulled point even now inserted under a partly pried-up floorboard, that Daniel Jouvard, the descendant of that jolly old pirate, had let fall with a thud when he heard Peggy beneath him.

Had he not heard Peggy beneath him, this story might have had a far different outcome; but that, of course, is neither here nor there. He did drop the crowbar, and, twenty-four hours afterward, Peggy's father, fiery-eyed with the lust for gold, picked it up again.

Acting, it may have been, fairly upon instinct, he shoved the point of the bar under that partly raised floorboard. Perhaps he was obeying the touch of a ghostly hand on his elbow. Perhaps— But let us speculate no further.

Colton McAllister placed the crowbar's point under that floorboard. He brought pressure to bear upon it. A nail shrieked. Other nails joined in the shrill, protesting chorus. Suddenly the board popped up and flopped over with a clatter on its side, the old, square, hand-wrought nails sticking out like little rusty daggers.

The exclamation that Mr. McAllister uttered did not leave his mouth in cultured form. It was a terrible and exquisitely appropriate bit of profanity, such as pirates may have used in those fine, bloody old days as they swarmed up the sides of a helpless, wallowing merchantman.

The good man commenced to tremble. A whinnying sound issued from between his quivering, moist lips.

The flopping of the plank had disclosed to Mr. McAllister's entranced stare the upper surface of a leather chest, bound in brass.

From that point on, a motion picture camera could hardly have kept up with his movements. The crowbar, which had slipped from his suddenly nerveless fingers, was recovered with a swoop. Its dull edge was inserted under the adjoining plank. The nails in this one positively screamed. That plank popped off.

One more had to be removed before the chest could be lifted out of its two hundred year old hiding place. Mr. McAllister fairly obliterated that plank.



He tossed the crowbar across the attic. It struck sparks in its collision with the fine old stone chimney.

With clawing hands, fortune's darling reached for the handles at the ends of the leather chest. He swung it up to the floor as if it weighed no more than a feather.

"Gold! Gold!" Mr. McAllister cried, hysterically—and who could blame the man for being hysterical? Every boy's dream had come true. Mr. McAllister had had to wait until he was well into his fifties before the dream came true, but its luster was not dimmed.

The chest was not as large as he had expected it to be. It measured, perhaps, two feet in length, a foot across, and the same in depth. Its brass binding was blackened by time, and the old, old lock on its face was scarcely more than a cartoon of a lock done in reddish-brown powder. A soft kick demolished it.

Mr. McAllister did not open the chest at once. He knew that he would not be disappointed when he opened it. Its heaviness insured him against that.

He looked at it from all sides, letting the joyous fact soak in. He executed a fantastic dance. He clasped his hands. He smote his chest. He sang a snatch from an old forgotten song.

He was young again! Indeed, is not the fountain of youth, perhaps, a fountain that gushes pure, minted gold?

His exhilaration subsiding a trifle, and his curiosity getting the better of him, Mr. McAllister placed one hand at each end of the leather, brass-bound lid.

He gave a heave, and the lid swung up. At that moment, as fortuitously as each succeeding event in the chain of them, the sun struck through a knothole in the decayed old roof, and fell with a splash into the chest's contents.

Mr. McAllister dropped to his knees. He buried his hands to the wrists in those loose, soft, beautiful gold coins.

"Doubloons! Double doubloons!" he got out in a voice that would have curdled the blood of any child under the age of eighteen.

He picked one out of the glowing mass. On one side was struck the profile of Queen Isabella the Second, and on the other her majesty's crest.

He selected a white coin. This was of silver, about the size of an American dollar. It was badly worn, but he could plain-

ly make out the figure 8 stamped on one side.

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!" he chanted.

Then, in his delirium, he bethought himself of the fabled diamond necklace. He decanted the gold and silver coins in heaps on the floor, and presently his plunging fingers came in contact with a smooth metallic surface. He scraped away coins until he could lift it out—an exquisitely wrought casket of silver.

He lifted the lid. Again those animal-like sounds issued from his lips.

Diamonds! Diamonds as big as cherries! Diamonds strung together in a golden chain of the most exquisite workmanship! The necklace of Queen Isabella!

Here was the queen's necklace that the queen had never worn; had, indeed, never feasted her eyes upon! A missing link in history! A fabulous necklace, hidden away in the attic of a New England farmhouse since the days when men were pirates and ships were galleons!

"Wow!" Mr. McAllister remarked.

Instantly following that exclamation of the utmost relief and ecstasy, an expression of sly cunning crept over his face. What was the best course to pursue?

This treasure belonged to the man on whose property it was found. Was this property legally his own—actually his own? He must make sure of that. He must see Mr. Hamble and make some further deposit. What then?

His winging thoughts flew to Peggy. He could see Peggy's face light with rapture. After all, would it be wise to consult Peggy immediately?

Mr. McAllister loved his daughter, but he was a greedy, selfish man. He was selfish and greedy, not alone for the profits that would accrue from the sale of this treasure; he was selfish of the manner in which the money would be spent.

Peggy would put a damper on his spirits. She would talk immediately of good, safe, sound, six per cent bonds. She would insist that the money, or a portion of it, be spent on improving this farm.

Mr. McAllister now gravely doubted the wisdom of raising chickens and ducks. Last night the scheme had appealed to him, but he had been a whipped man then. Now, raising chickens and ducks seemed a pretty tame project.

"After all," Colton McAllister com-

muned with himself, "I am still a young man. I am only fifty-three. Life is still before me. Why should I sink myself on this dreary farm?"

And he told himself, further:

"I have worked hard all my life. Luck has always been against me. I have never really had a fling. Of course, there was that trip to the world's fair at Buffalo, but was that really a fling? Of course, I will spend only a very small fraction of this fortune. I must go to New York, anyhow. You can't sell a collection like this in a place like Mill City."

His thoughts pleasantly occupied along these lines, Mr. McAllister returned the spilled coins and the silver casket to the chest, and carried his treasure downstairs. It seemed to weigh hardly anything.

Reaching the front porch, he stopped and looked cautiously about him. Gold drew enemies as blood drew flies. He was, until this treasure was in a strong room, the guardian of a fortune, and in this day and age of bandits, it was a most dangerous occupation to be the guardian of a fortune.

Seeing that the coast was clear, he almost ran down the path to where he had parked the flivver. He lifted the chest into the tonneau. He put it on the floor and covered it carefully with a frayed old lap robe and a crocus sack that he found there.

His treasure safely stowed away, Colton McAllister drove to the residence of Horace G. Hamble.

The old gentleman was most cordial. He had, in that morning's mail, received a note from his niece in Hollywood, urging him to come and play granddaddy parts without delay. He was in high spirits.

So was Mr. McAllister. Their meeting was almost a love feast.

"I have looked over my farm," Mr. McAllister said, "just to verify my daughter's enthusiastic reports of the place. And I am going to give you my check for the entire amount."

"It ain't necessary," Mr. Hamble declared. "Your looks are plenty of guarantee for me, and so was your daughter's. Now, there's a fine gal, Mr. McAllister—one of the old-fashioned kind that wants to put down roots, unless my eyesight's mistaken."

"Just the same," Mr. McAllister interrupted, "I want to tighten up the sale of that property. Supposing we drive down

to Redfern Junction, look up the title, and see about the deed transfer."

"The title's as clear as spring water," Mr. Hamble told him, "but I'll go down with you."

"I want everything legal and ship-shape."

"Sure! You're a business man. I ain't blamin' you."

So they drove to Redfern Junction, Mr. McAllister in his flivver and Mr. Hamble in his flivver, because Mr. McAllister, as he explained, had pressing business to attend to in Mill City.

A little more than an hour later he was driving madly toward Mill City, glancing from time to time into the tonneau, to see that his treasure was not disturbed.

He drove into the very heart of Mill City, and parked presently before the dingy marble façade of the Mill City First National Bank and Trust Company. Fifteen years ago he had placed his twenty-five-thousand-dollar inheritance on deposit in this institution, and he knew that his good friend, Mr. Alter, the president, had sadly watched that small capital dwindle and melt away. How delighted Mr. Alter would be with his good fortune!

He pushed past an attendant with the leather chest in his arms, and, to the astonishment of the president of the Mill City National Bank and Trust Company, deposited the strange, heavy object in the very center of his blotter.

Mr. Alter was a pale-faced man, with cold eyes and a white waxed mustache; but those cold eyes became warm as Mr. McAllister unfolded his amazing story, and the pale face became tinted with a flush of excitement that had not been there in many years.

"I absolutely clinched the sale of the property," Colton McAllister explained, "by giving him a check for thirty-nine hundred and seventy-five. That makes it outright ownership. There isn't a flaw in the title. It's in the books in the town hall office—a clear title all the way back to the grant by King George. I was sure you wouldn't mind my overdrawing—"

"Your personal note will be all right," Mr. Alter said, generously. "Now, what are you going to do?"

"Going to New York and sell it to a museum. I'm going to give you a double doubloon as a souvenir. Beautiful coins, aren't they? And I'm going to keep a

couple for myself. All the rest I'm going to convert right into cash. If you will make that note large enough to cover the overdraft and my expenses to New York—"

"I will," interrupted the banker. "How much do you think you've got here?"

"That necklace alone ought to fetch fifty thousand."

"What," Mr. Alter wanted to know, "are you going to do with your fortune?"

"I haven't quite decided," Mr. McAllister replied.

"I had an idea you were going into the chicken and duck business," the banker said, "as you've been wishing to do for so many years."

Mr. McAllister looked vague. "I was sort of thinking of going into business again. The radio business—"

"If you'll take my advice," the banker again stopped him, "you'll stay away from business. I've watched you pretty closely, Mac, in the last fifteen years. You made twenty-five thousand last a long time. But every business you took over, failed sooner or later. You ought to make a fine farmer, and with all the capital you'll have, you can stock a wonderful farm."

"I'll think things over," Mr. McAllister said. He was a little resentful. In his dizzily exalted state, he wanted advice from no one. "Now, I want to go to New York."

"Shall I send a guard along with you? That's a lot of gold to be carrying around in public. I'll give you an armed guard. How soon will you start?"

"I'll take the first train," Mr. McAllister replied.

## VII

THE first intimation Peggy received of the good fortune that had befallen her father took the form of a telephone call from the city room of the *Mill City Daily News*. She took down the telephone receiver to hear a strange voice over the wire ask for details of the treasure trove.

"What did the chest contain, specifically?" the strange voice wanted to know.

"Are you kidding me?" Peggy retorted.

"Certainly you know about it!" the reporter protested.

"It is a bolt from the blue to me," Peggy said. "My father started out from home this morning to look for treasure on a farm we just bought out beyond Redfern

Junction. If he found it, he has managed to keep the secret wonderfully, as far as I am concerned."

"He was in a great hurry," the reporter informed her. "He was just leaving for New York on the one nineteen, and our man wasn't in time to get the details. He had the chest with him, and he was accompanied by an armed guard. All we gathered was that the chest was full of Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight."

"Where did he find it?" Peggy asked. "Buried under a tree?"

"No. It seems that your father went into the attic of this farmhouse, and found a crowbar jammed between two boards. Some one else had evidently been about to pry up the board. Your father pried the board off—and there was the chest!"

"Oh!" Peggy breathed.

"And you don't know just what the chest contained?"

"No," Peggy answered. "Good-by."

She returned to the sick room, to find Daniel Jouvard sitting up with round dazed eyes.

"Did you hear?" she panted.

"I heard," he groaned.

"Father went into the attic and found a crowbar jammed between two floor boards. All he did was to pry off that board—and there was the chest. Some one had left the crowbar there."

"You know who the some one was," the young man said, dully.

"I know—Mr. Jouvard!" she exclaimed.

"I think it's a rotten shame. That chest belongs to you—by right of discovery, by right of inheritance—by every right!"

"Oh, no," he disagreed. "That isn't so. Legally, it's yours. If I'd found it yesterday, it would have been old man Hamble's. No matter if I'd found it yesterday or today, or any other day, it would have belonged to some one else. I was just flirting with the moon."

Peggy bit her lips. "I think it was darned mean of dad to slip off this way. He didn't dare face me with that chest. He didn't dare face you, either. You're entitled to a share of that treasure, and you're going to get it!"

His answer was to turn his face to the wall.

"Listen!" Peggy cried. "Gee, but I'm sorry about this, Mr. Jouvard."

The young man turned his head and looked at her.

"If you don't stop calling me Mr. Jouvard, I'll bite you," he growled. "My name is Dan."

"All right — *Dan!*" she acquiesced. "One thing is certain. No matter what he does, we're going to go through with our scheme for the farm—chickens, and ducks, and hogs! There 'll be enough to stock the farm, and there'll be enough to restore the house and put in the bathroom and the light plant and the artesian well. I know very well that dad has gone off on a wild bust; but he can't spend it all. It's too bad you or I didn't find that chest, knowing my father as I do; but we'll have beautiful white Berkshires grunting on that hilltop yet!"

"Not with my luck," the victim of circumstances remarked.

The conversation was interrupted by a messenger boy. Mr. McAllister had resumed his fatherly obligations in time to dispatch a telegram from a way station. It read:

FOUND THE TREASURE SEE AFTER-  
NOON PAPERS FOR DETAILS TAKING IT  
TO NEW YORK WILL SELL TO HIGHEST  
BIDDER AND RETURN SOON AS POSSIBLE  
LOVE AND KISSES DAD.

"Maybe he isn't going on that wild bust after all," Peggy said, hopefully.

There was no more news from her prodigal parent that day. The Mill City afternoon papers were full of the story, and on the following morning the New York papers gave it the dignity of a column on the front page.

Thrilled and depressed by turns, Peggy read these accounts. All that day she waited for word from fortune's favorite, but Mr. McAllister was too busy to write.

Next morning's papers edified her with the information that Colton McAllister had disposed of the entire collection of doubloons, double doubloons, pieces of eight, and the queen's necklace to the Addington Collection for eighty-five thousand dollars.

A hushed week passed. Daniel Jouvard's condition improved. He stopped running abnormal temperatures, and he ceased to show subnormal temperatures. His throat did not ache.

Daniel Jouvard fell sickeningly in love with his nurse. He followed her about with his hungry young eyes as she performed her little tasks.

Peggy sensed that this was happening, and felt that she had been seized by a

wave and was being carried headlong to heaven knew where. Her life had been quiet and smooth and uneventful until the afternoon, only a little while ago, when she climbed to the top of the enchanting hill.

Since then she had simply been fate's plaything. Her father had become a stranger to her, his head turned by the sudden and miraculous accumulation of unexpected wealth.

Everywhere she went people looked at her strangely, curiously. She knew that they were talking about her, not only because she was the daughter of a man suddenly rich, but because of Daniel Jouvard's residence in her apartment.

Women looked at her strangely, men looked at her knowingly. Before long, she felt very much like running away from it all.

She liked Daniel Jouvard immensely—more, in fact, than she had ever liked a man before. He was tall and handsome, and eager; she liked eager men; but to her the situation was rather hopeless. It all depended upon her father.

If her father regained his senses, things would work out. Yes, if she could only get these two men to the farm, where life would be normal, she knew she could work things out.

The first day that Daniel Jouvard was up, he followed her about the apartment like a puppy. And he kept looking at her. That hungry look in his eyes had increased until now it would be only fair to describe it as a starved look.

"I wish I was rich," he remarked in the kitchen, when he was drying the dishes as Peggy washed them.

Peggy let this pass. She knew why he wished he was rich.

When she was dusting in the dining room, he observed:

"Do you know, Peggy, you're the nicest thing that ever happened to me?"

Peggy also let this pass. She didn't want a poor young man to be saddled with her, with the future as uncertain as it was.

"I love you," he said boldly, as Peggy was sweeping the living room.

"You mustn't," Peggy objected.

"Why not?" he wanted to know.

Peggy smiled. "When the crew of a ship doesn't know whether it is going to sink or not, they keep their mind on the pumps. I'm too busy worrying to think of anything else."



"You're a darling," the young man said, and subsided.

He was well on the road to recovery when the prodigal parent returned. Colton McAllister had written to his doting daughter only once during those two weeks of mysterious and torturing silence, and then to say, in a large way, that he had placed five hundred dollars to her account in the Mill City National Bank and Trust Company, and that he was in fine health.

He returned home one evening when Peggy was preparing dinner. She heard his key grate in the lock, and she went flying down the long hall to meet him.

The door opened upon a dazzling spectacle. It was with difficulty that she recognized the glittering creature who entered as her father.

He sported a large diamond in a necktie that suggested an explosion in a dye factory. He wore a pale-gray, double-breasted suit with a lavender pin stripe in it. The coat was heroically wide at the shoulders, and marvelously slim at the hips. It was cut collegiate fashion.

He carried a walking stick. He wore cream-colored spats. His finger nails glistened with the handiwork of a manicurist.

His face glowed ruddily from massage. He emanated the faint, subtle odor of an appealing perfume.

"Dad!" she wailed.

He closed the door and jauntily twirled the stick.

"Well," he said briskly, "we're only young once, aren't we?"

### VIII

THE worst was yet to come. Colton McAllister, for years a humble worm, had turned. He had renewed his youth with all the enthusiasm and vigor of a college student celebrating a football victory over a rival institution of learning.

He had had a fine, free time, without regard for the cost. He admitted that he had entertained the entire chorus of a popular musical revue at a champagne and lobster supper; he had ordered an eight-cylinder motor car with a special paint job; he had been measured for seventeen suits of clothes. He had been lit twelve days out of the fourteen.

All of these exploits he boasted about to the dumfounded Peggy. It was as if the governor of a faithful machine had slipped its gears, and the machine had been

running wild. It was still running wild. It probably would run wilder.

"How much of that eighty-five thousand have you left?" Peggy wanted to know.

"A great portion of it, my dear," the errant father said, with his new magniloquent air.

"Have you any of it left?"

"Indeed I have, my dear."

"How much?"

"I am keeping good track of it, never fear, my darling. How well you look, Peggy!"

"What are your plans?"

"Unformed," he replied, twirling the stick. "Quite unformed."

Colton McAllister, with the taste of raw meat fresh on his lips, would discuss nothing. He would positively not consider chickens, ducks, and hogs.

His only reference to farm products occurred when he followed Peggy into the kitchen. He saw that Peggy was preparing beefsteak, and he uttered a coarse remark, supposedly humorous—one of many such that, Peggy was to learn to her sorrow, he had accumulated in New York.

"Throw my meat on the floor, mother!" he exclaimed. "I feel like a lion."

A little later he inquired after Daniel Jouvard.

"He's lying down, I think," Peggy replied. "I wish you'd go in there and talk to him."

"Not now," her father said, absently buffing the nails of his left hand upon the sleeve of his right arm.

No; he would not confer with Daniel Jouvard. He spoke vaguely of suitably rewarding "that sterling young fellow," but he remained maddeningly indefinite about that and about everything else.

At the last moment, before Peggy served dinner, he decided to go down to the Palace Hotel for his dinner.

"There is some one I must see, my dear," the fond parent explained, and Peggy knew that he wanted to go down to the Palace only to preen his new fine feathers before those loafers. How this simple man had changed!

And the worst was yet to come. Oh, much the worst! It arrived three days after his return from New York, in the person of a slim, blond lady of indeterminate age and sundry blandishments.

Peggy's father was rather vague and evasive in telling just how and where he



had met Mrs. Winslow—she was a widow, thrice, poor thing—but as to the state of his esteem for her there could be no doubt. She arrived, and put up at the Palace Hotel on the day that the new motor car was delivered, and admitted that she herself had selected the body color. After one glance into those soft, baby-blue eyes, Peggy could not doubt this.

The widow called Mr. McAllister daddy, in a honeyed voice, with a rising and falling inflection that made of that old-fashioned word nothing short of a kiss in the dark. She flattered him audaciously; her favorite vocal tone was a low croon; and Colton McAllister blushed and giggled. It was really pretty terrible.

The new car was a sport model. The body was mauve. The wheels were cream. The trimmings were polished copper. To Peggy, it did not look very well fitted for work about a chicken, duck, and hog farm.

Peggy disliked the cooing blond lady with a fierce, untrammelled dislike. Mrs. Winslow, within five minutes of their introduction, was calling her darling, honey, and Peg.

She was, Peggy sensed, a clever, worldly woman. Peggy sized her up with the cruelty of a jealous woman. She saw that the woman's feathers, while fine, were a little worn; she gathered, from unintentional hints that the lady dropped, that Mrs. Winslow had seen better days. Peggy guessed her age at forty-nine; Mrs. Winslow claimed a scant thirty-six.

Mrs. Winslow was clever. She knew, as Peggy phrased it, which side her bread was buttered on. And she played her game, if a game it was, cunningly and shrewdly.

Peggy did not believe for a minute that the woman was in love with her father. She believed that Mrs. Winslow was anxiously looking about for some one to feather a nest for her. Colton McAllister was going to be the featherer.

Mrs. Winslow accordingly, so Peggy believed, proceeded to consolidate her position. To Peggy she was as nice as pie. She came to the apartment frequently. Once she went as far as to insist on helping Peggy to wash the dinner dishes. Afterward she insisted that Peggy go riding with them in the mauve car.

Peggy's attitude toward the interloper was one of cool and distant politeness. Her only hope was that her father would come

to his senses, and discover for himself the kind of woman Mrs. Winslow really was.

Peggy didn't object to Mrs. Winslow's morals, or lack of the same; it was her habit of living that Peggy feared most. Mrs. Winslow was the kind of woman who would sit around an apartment and play a phonograph while the dishes went unwashed and the beds remained unmade; who, in the afternoon, would go to the movies and serve her husband a cold, delicatessen supper when he came home from work.

She would flirt with any man who attracted her eye. Peggy saw her do this—and shuddered. This common, cheap, vulgar little thing for a stepmother!

Peggy's father spoke more and more vaguely of starting up in another business. When the excitement of New York, new clothes, and new car paled, he began to speak at first jokingly, then with more and more seriousness, of the farm. Bubbles would love it, he was sure.

Bubbles was his pet name for Mrs. Winslow.

"Bubbles has spoken of it often. Bubbles will love the cows and chickies, won't you, Bubbles?"

Mrs. Winslow was a baby-talk lady.

"Bubbles loves the cows and chickies," the blond widow cooed.

Peggy looked at her skeptically.

"Did you ever milk a cow?" she asked bluntly.

"Oh, no, darling, I've never lived in the country, but I know I'll adore it. The beautiful green trees, and the radio, and the car!"

"You really think you'd like the country?" Peggy asked.

"I'll love it," Bubbles insisted.

The choice of the tense of verbs was always the same. Mrs. Winslow said "I will," as if it was a foregone conclusion that she would marry Mr. McAllister, and Peggy said "You would," as if a large doubt existed.

With a shrewd feminine eye, Peggy watched the little romance develop.

Those were days and nights of madness, as far as Colton McAllister was concerned. They were on the go all day long, and most of the night, he and his lady love.

Mrs. Winslow loved to drive. She was a reckless driver, and there was a succession of crumpled fenders and replaced bumpers; a series of arrests and fines.

And she loved to dance. There were several road houses on the outskirts of Mill City, and every evening she and Mr. McAllister went to these places, drank bad gin and danced to raucous music.

The pace began to tell upon the prodigal parent. He spoke more and more frequently of the quiet, comfortable life on a farm. He began to look tired. He wasn't getting enough sleep; the only kind of exercise he was getting was dancing, and he was eating too many boiled lobsters and drinking too much imitation alcohol for a man of his age.

It seemed to Peggy that her father was doing most of this under forced draft. Dark welts appeared under his eyes, and one day, instead of wearing one of his seventeen new suits, his spats, one of his radiant neckties, and carrying his stick, he appeared at breakfast in one of his baggy old suits.

He didn't appear in it very long. Mrs. Winslow came up from the hotel for a day's outing. She saw the shabby old suit and almost had hysterics. In the ensuing argument, she all but lost her temper. So did Mr. McAllister.

"I want to go out to the farm," he declared. "I want to decide where I'm going to put those new chicken runs."

"Well, I don't," Bubbles objected. "I want to try out the car on that new State road above Clinton. My waiter told me this morning at breakfast that his brother-in-law did over seventy-three on it Sunday. I'm going to beat that or bust."

"I wish you would see about those chicken runs," Peggy put in. "The summer's going, and I'd like to know just what we're going to do. Dan and I want to get started."

Mrs. Winslow started to say something, but changed her mind. The look she gave Peggy, however, was enough.

It was only a brief glance, and then it was gone, but while it lasted, and after it was gone, Peggy knew just where she stood in the blond widow's estimation. She had always thought that Mrs. Winslow hated her, and now she was sure of it.

The sulphur and brimstone of impending battle was in the air. Daniel Jouvard, coming in at that moment, sensed it, and stopped near the door.

Mr. McAllister fidgeted. Bubbles sat in a wicker chair and wickedly tapped the tip of one daintily shod foot on the rug.

She sprang up. "Let's go, daddy," she cried. And started down the hall.

"Dad," Peggy said, as he started after her, "I want you to wait a minute. Bubbles can wait for you in the car."

He turned back, reluctant, peevish, frowning, and Bubbles went on downstairs.

"Dad, I'm getting pretty fed up with the way you've been acting," Peggy began. "Don't leave the room, Dan. This concerns you as much as it does me. Dad, I think you've been acting rotten. You know that Dan and I want to get things started at the farm, and you keep putting us off. We can't do anything out there without money. We want to get the house fixed up, and the chicken houses repaired, and some hogpens built. There are a thousand things to do, and we're perfectly willing to do 'em. I want you to write me a check for five thousand dollars."

"I won't do it," Mr. McAllister said. "When I get around to attending to that farm, I'll manage everything. Right now I'm too busy."

"Busy! Busy! Tearing around day and night with that cheap little thing?"

"Don't you dare call Mrs. Winslow names like that!"

"I will!" Peggy flared. "She's a gold digger, and she's common, and cheap, and vulgar, and she's making a fool out of you. A child could see that she isn't in love with you. She's just working you. Just look at all the things she's worked you for! That car, three diamond bracelets, a pearl necklace, three rings. Who paid for all those new clothes?"

"It's none of your business," her father snapped.

"It is my business! I've stuck by you through a lot of mighty lean years, and the way you've treated me since you've had this money is disgraceful. Don't you dare leave this room! Part of that money rightfully belongs to Dan."

"Oh, shucks—" Dan began.

"Legally—" Mr. McAllister interrupted ponderously.

"Morally," Peggy bitingly stopped both of them, "you've stolen that money from Dan. You read a letter you had no right to read—took it out of his pocket while he was lying there, unconscious and delirious, in bed. You sneaked out and took the money that he was on the very verge of getting himself. And it belongs to him, too. He's the only living descendant of

Godfrey Jouvard, the man who put that chest in the attic."

"I'd like to have him prove it in court!" Mr. McAllister blustered. "I've looked up the law on treasure trove. Hidden treasure belongs to the man who finds it, not even to the man whose property it is on, and not to the dead man who hid it. I bought that farm with my own money. I got that chest with my own hands. Don't you dare tell me what I'm going to do with my money!"

"Then you aren't going to let us work the farm—Dan and me?"

"I'm going to do exactly what I please, young lady."

"Yes," Peggy said, wearily, "you're going to let that woman ruin you. Oh, I saw your check book. You've spent over twenty thousand dollars of that money already."

"Well, what of it?" he snarled. "I'll tell you this for the last time: it's my money. I'm going to do what I please with it. I've been a pretty lonely man for fifteen years, since your mother died, and I was a pretty lonely man for a good many years before that."

"Dad! How can you!"

"I'm telling you. You act as if I was an old man. I'm only fifty-three. I'm in the prime of my life. My best years are still ahead of me. I want a good time, and I'm going to have it."

"You don't love that woman!"

"Don't I? Well, I'll show you whether I love her or not!"

"Are—aren't you going to do anything about the farm?"

"When I get good and ready—and not five minutes before. I'm pretty tired of your impertinence, young lady. You appear to forget that I'm your father."

"Give me a check for five thousand," Peggy pleaded, "and let Dan and me get busy out there. He's still in quarantine, but we'll slip out, anyway."

"He'd better stay in quarantine," Mr. McAllister said, starting for the door. "It's illegal to break quarantine. I don't know what's got into you, Peggy, I really don't."

And he left on the heels of that righteous comment.

Peggy stood with clenched fists and white, working face, in the middle of the living room until the front door slammed. Then her eyes filled with tears. She snif-

fled twice. And Daniel Jouvard took her into his arms.

"Honey, listen," he said, soothingly, "we'll just forget that those two exist. We'll paddle our own canoe. It isn't much of a canoe, but—"

"You mean—admit to that darned woman that I'm licked?" Peggy panted.

"You're fighting pillows, Peggy," he said. "I feel like a skunk, loafing around here, seeing you abused and insulted by that pair, and not doing anything about it. I'm going. Dog-gone it, I'm going out and get a job, quarantine or no quarantine, and I mean right now."

"You are positively not going to leave this house," Peggy said, firmly. "You're a sick man. You've lost fifteen pounds. At least part of that money is rightfully yours, and I'm going to get it for you! Now go back there and finish your nap."

That evening her father and Bubbles returned from their automobile outing, tired but triumphant.

A soft, sweet, purring Peggy met them. She was tired of being the ping-pong ball of fate. She was going to take matters into her own hands in her own way, and bring things to a crisis.

"Well," she said sweetly, "did you beat the waiter's brother-in-law's record?"

"We did seventy-six!" Bubbles gurgled. "Wasn't it just too exciting, dad-dee?"

"Great!" that good man stated; but he looked a wreck.

A blaze of sword play drew Peggy's interest to the second finger from the left on Bubbles's left hand. It was a solitaire diamond of at least four carats.

Mr. McAllister had carried out his threat, just as Peggy had fully expected him to do.

The blond widow flew over to Peggy and kissed her.

"We're engaged!" she announced.

"How wonderful!" Peggy applauded.

"We're going to be married soon!"

"Yes," Peggy's father said, "the sooner the better."

"Isn't it dandy," Peggy remarked, "that you're going to be so happy? Bubbles is so much livelier than mother was, isn't she? You know, dad, I want you to be awfully happy."

Bubbles looked at her suspiciously, then the baby-blue eyes twinkled again.

"We're going to be awfully happy, aren't we, dad-dee?" she demanded.

"You bet we are!" Mr. McAllister cried sturdily.

Peggy's dark eyes glowed upon them.

"Why," she said, "don't you do something romantic? You've never had much romance, dad. Why don't you have a runaway marriage, or something equally exciting? Why—why don't you get married to-night? Oh, wouldn't it be fun to stage a runaway marriage!"

Bubbles and Mr. McAllister stared at her. The widow's eyes were gleaming, but Mr. McAllister seemed a little confused, a little bewildered. He looked very much as you would expect a man to look who was being railroaded to some destination that he did not hanker for.

And his attitude gave Peggy exactly the information that she had wanted to possess. He did not love Bubbles. He did not really want to marry her. He wanted to play around with her, and that was all.

"I think that's a beautiful idea, don't you, dad-dee?" Bubbles cried.

"Well," Mr. McAllister said, "I was just wondering if it wouldn't be just as well—"

"How can we arrange it?" Bubbles promptly cut him off.

"Why don't you let me arrange it?" Peggy said. "You don't have to establish a residence in this State. All you need is the license and the minister. You get the license, and I'll get the minister. Oh, I think a runaway wedding will be loads of fun. We'll all go. I know a minister up in Coleytown who will perform the ceremony. Dan and I will go along as witnesses. Now you and dad trot on and get the license before the office closes. Have your dinner, and drop around for Dan and me at about eight o'clock. I'll attend to everything."

Bubbles rushed over and embraced Peggy, and Peggy suffered herself to be kissed.

"I wonder," Peggy said to herself, after they had gone, "if I am doing the right thing. I'm tired of waiting. I simply have to take matters into my own hands. Dad doesn't want to marry her, because he doesn't love her; and she wants to marry him because she wants a meal ticket; and as soon as dad's money is gone, she'll leave him flat. She hates me, and she has dad kidded into thinking that she simply dotes on me. I've got to make him realize the truth. I've got to bring things to a head.

After the ceremony I bet we'll find out some things!"

And, to Daniel Jouvard, a little later, she put the same query, after talking it all over very thoroughly with him.

"Daniel, darling, am I doing the right thing?" Peggy demanded.

"Peggy," he said, adoringly, "you invariably do the right thing. You are the rightest girl in the world, as well as the cleverest, the most beautiful, and the most adorable. Stars twinkle when you walk under them. The sun waxes brighter when you walk in its light."

"Your estimable pirate forbear," Peggy stopped him, "must have kissed the Blarney stone during his travels."

"Well, love is like that," the wise young man said. "As long as I will always feel that way about you, have you any serious objections?"

"Darling," Peggy replied, "I am a regular little white Berkshire for adoration. Go ahead and tell me some more."

"You are a wonderful engineer," the red-haired young man stated. "But, in your elaborate preparations for to-night's wedding, you have overlooked the most important item."

"Good night!" the beautiful creature gasped. "What item have I overlooked?"

"Us!"

"Us?"

"Us!"

"How do you mean, Daniel?"

"Just consider yourself," he suggested. "Bubbles has been married three times, and you haven't even been married once!"

Peggy considered him with narrowed eyes.

"We are a couple of babes in the woods," she replied. "We are broke. We are jobless. We have nowhere to go but out—after we have got dad married off to Bubbles. We are dreaming a dream of chickens, ducks, hogs, and happiness forever after. The law says you have to stay in this house in quarantine two weeks longer. But I am a weak woman. Call a taxicab. Then, while I am popping into my unbleached linen wedding dress, get the Rev. Bascom's house on the telephone."

She caught Daniel Jouvard's strong young chin in her two hands, and in a cooing imitation of Bubbles's voice, asked:

"Is oo sure oo loves oor tweetums, dad-dee, dee-ar?"

"If you ever address me in that tone



again, or call me that vile name again," the fierce young man said, "I will crown you."

And he kissed her furiously.

### IX

WHEN Bubbles and Mr. McAllister returned, flushed with gin, excitement, and dancing, all arrangements for their wedding had been completed. Bubbles had her things packed and in the luggage space of the car. Peggy had her father's things packed, ready to be carried down.

"The minister," Peggy explained to the slightly bleary-eyed Bubbles, "is a Baptist. Do you object to being married by a Baptist?"

"Do you know any funnier jokes?" Bubbles giggled. "Listen, sweetie. I've been married, in my previous incarnations, by an Episcopalian, a sea captain, and a Seventh Day Adventist. All denominations look alike to me."

"As long as you get married," Peggy said.

Bubbles swayed slightly, and fixed what was intended to be a stern, reproving glance upon Peggy.

"Are you intimating that I am crazy to get married to this old gentleman?"

"Bubbles!" Mr. McAllister gasped.

"I don't like to be spoken to that way," the widow muttered.

Bubbles drove the car. The distance was only five miles, but at times she made the speedometer register seventy. It was a wild, reckless ride.

Peggy and Daniel, perched amid much excess luggage, clung in each other's arms and mentally kissed each other good-by at every curve in the road.

But they reached Coleytown intact, and presently stopped in front of a fine old house with a mansard roof. It was an evening that Peggy McAllister would always remember. A brilliant full moon filled the night with silver, and a soft, warm wind, fragrant of honeysuckle, whispered in the trees.

A young man in black opened the door for them—a melancholy looking young man, as if the strain of keeping his little flock free of sin and temptation was beginning to tell on him.

"How do you do?" he greeted them in the rich, deep voice that is so eminently suited for pulpit purposes.

"This is Dr. Bascom, father. Mrs.

Winslow, doctor, and Mr. Jouvard," Peggy introduced them, as they filed into the rector's study.

It was a cozy, cheery room, lined with books, and worn with age and loving occupancy.

"I suppose you're in a hurry," Dr. Bascom said. "Most people are, nowadays. You have the license? May I see it, please? Everything must be shipshape. Just stand over here."

It did not astonish Peggy to see Bubbles flirting with the young man, hardly before the door was closed.

Mr. McAllister was pale and fidgety, but his was not the pallor or the nervousness of the blissfully expectant bridegroom. He looked older and wearier than ever.

How dark the welts appeared under his eyes! How sagging his cheeks! How dull his eyes! He looked all of seventy.

Perhaps he was dreaming of another wedding, and regretting this one—perhaps not. No one but his Maker will ever know.

Fatal words were suddenly being read by the young man in black. Mr. McAllister heard his weary old voice answering solemn questions. Now he was fumbling in his pocket for the ring. Bubbles had selected it—a platinum band set with diamonds.

"I pronounced you man and wife!" the minister announced.

"Hooked!" Peggy stated in a loud clear voice. "Aren't you happy, daddy? Stretching ahead of you to the end of your grave—or to the end of your bank account, rather—is an endless succession of lobster suppers, drinking bouts, and dancing!"

"Is that so?" the bride inquired stiffly.

"Well, isn't it so?" Peggy asked.

"Peggy!" Mr. McAllister groaned. "Remember, she's your mother now."

"You bet I'm her mother now," Bubbles said. "And the first thing I'm going to tell you, young lady, is that you'd better shift your line. I'm getting mighty fed up with the way you talk to me. You think you own the earth, you do."

"I am glad we brought up this subject," Peggy declared. "Now that we're all here together, let's discuss everything. I want to know just where I stand, and where the farm stands, and where a lot of other things stand."

"Peggy!" her father protested. "We can discuss all these things later."

"Nix," Bubbles declared. "We'll discuss 'em right now. There are a whole flock of things I want to have established before this marriage of ours goes any farther—and I don't mean maybe!"

"Do your stuff," Peggy urged her. "We are all ears."

"One thing," Bubbles said, "and you might as well get used to it right now; you are not going to live under the same roof with me."

"When," Peggy wanted to know, "did you decide that?"

"The minute I first laid eyes on you."

"You don't like me?"

"Don't make me laugh."

"You've pretended to like me."

"Yes, I've pretended a lot of things."

"Well, this is certainly a surprise," Mr. McAllister said. "I thought you were very fond of Peggy."

"There is a lot more to the surprise," Bubbles announced. "The second item on the list, since you're all so crazy to know what my platform is, is that we are not going to live on any farm."

"My God!" Mr. McAllister groaned. "You can't mean that, Bubbles!"

"I can't, can't I? You just try to drag me out to live on a farm and you'll find out. I belong in the city, and not in Mill City, either. We are going to live in New York, where my friends are."

"But I don't like New York, and—and I don't like your friends," the poor man groaned.

"My friends," Bubbles retorted, "are just as good as you are—and a damned sight more interesting."

"But I thought you liked Mill City. I—I thought you wanted to live on a farm. You said you did."

"I said a lot of things."

"But I have my heart set, Bubbles, on that chicken and duck farm."

"Applesauce," Bubbles remarked.

"We're going to live there!" he shouted.

"Oh, no, we're not."

"Go on," Peggy said. "Let's hear some more. About money."

"I'll give you an ear full," Bubbles obliged. "You aren't going to get a nickel of his money. God knows, there's little enough."

"You hear that, dad?" Peggy inquired. "You see the kind of lady you've married? I certainly wish you all the happiness in the world."

"She's just joking," Mr. McAllister said. "She doesn't mean any of this. She really wants to go out on the farm, and she is fond of you, Peggy."

"Stop kidding yourself," Bubbles remarked, coarsely. "I've been walking around with this volcano in my system ever since I came to Mill City. Now I'm speaking right out from the heart. Believe me, I've suffered keeping it in."

"You're married to him now, and you can say just whatever you please," Peggy said.

"You bet I can!"

"You've got him hooked," Peggy went on. "If he doesn't play the way you want him to play, you can drag him into court, and pry all his money away from him."

"I can!"

"You wouldn't!" Mr. McAllister gasped. "Just watch me!"

"It's just as I said," Peggy went on. "I warned you, dad. I told you she's nothing but a cheap, common, vulgar little gold digger. All she's after is your money. She doesn't love you at all."

Bubbles was smiling a hard, defiant smile.

"If I cared a whoop in hell," was her reply, "I'd tear your hair out by the roots, you little fool. But I don't care. You're dead right. I should fall in love with an old man! Me! I'm hard up. If you want a divorce, dad-dee, it's going to cost you money."

"My God!" Peggy's father groaned.

"How much," Peggy wanted to know, "do you consider your affections worth?"

"Sixty thousand dollars," the lady said, promptly.

"Deducting the fifteen or twenty thousand that dad has spent on your jewelry?"

"That's velvet. I want sixty thousand cash—and the car."

"Oh, my God," the bruised man repeated.

"If you take sixty thousand cash, we will be broke," Peggy said. "It's all dad has left."

"I should be alarmed!"

Peggy looked at her father.

"Dad, now do you wish you had followed my advice?"

He had crumpled into a chair, sitting with his head in his hands.

Daniel Jouvard, perched on the edge of a table, was regarding him sympathetically.

"Well, dad?"

"I've been a fool. All I wanted was a little youth. Peggy, what am I going to do? This fiend of a woman can do just what she says. I'm ruined! Ruined again! How are we going to finance the farm? I don't care if I never see her again. I never want to see her again, but—how are we going to finance the farm?"

"Well," Bubbles said, "do we do business, or don't we? Or what do we do? I want to get back to New York. I'm sick of the sight of all of you, and I'm fed up on your hick town."

Peggy faced her with a strange little smile.

"Mrs. Winslow," she said, "what you've just said has been terribly interesting to all of us. It would have been much more interesting, I think, if the marriage had been performed by a real minister instead of an architect!"

### X

BUBBLES WINSLOW had reeled. Now she stared at Peggy, and she had clenched her fists.

"Let me tell you something," Daniel Jouvard put in coldly. "When the truth soaks into your scheming little head that a rising young architect tied the knot and not a minister, you're going to want to be a wild woman. Just you lay so much as a finger on Miss McAllister, and I might sock you good, Bubbles—I really might. You know I have pirate blood in my veins!"

Bubbles Winslow screamed faintly.

"You dirty bunch of double crossers!" she cried. "You're lying! You *are* a minister—you! Don't dare to tell me you aren't! You'd be afraid to commit a crime like that!"

Jimmy Bascom, from his corner of the room, grinned.

"Kid," he said, calmly, "you're certainly one hard-working little gold excavator, but you've tripped up on this bunch. I'm only a minister's son—and you know what *they* are!"

"Well, if you're a crook," Mrs. Winslow remarked, bitterly, "why didn't you tip me off on this dirt? I'd have made it worth your while."

"I was already bought," young Mr. Bascom explained, shamelessly.

Bubbles gave Peggy a deadly look; it reeked with professional jealousy.

"So you're a small town vamp!" the

city siren gritted. "I knew you were too good to be true!"

"And that's the hussy you wanted to marry, dad!" Peggy pointed out, cheerfully.

"Thank God, I'm free!" Colton McAllister said, straight from the heart.

"Just a minute!" Jimmy Bascom exclaimed, hurriedly. "Get me straight, Mrs. Winslow. Miss McAllister didn't buy me; it was Horace G. Hamble who sold her the farm where her dad found the doubloons. Hamble told me she was a fine, old-fashioned girl, and I ought to marry her, but I couldn't do that, because I'm already spoken for! However, I promised him to help her when her dad ran wild on the bases, and soon it became necessary to give you what your circle calls the bum's rush. So here we are!"

Mrs. Winslow glared from one to the other of her tormentors, like a besieged tigress choosing a victim on whom to wreak her rage.

"My dad, the minister, doesn't know what's going on, of course," Jimmy went on, pretending to be soothing. "If all hands want this ceremony done over again, now that all the evidence is in, I'll just pop around the corner to the church and ask the old gentleman to come here. Do you want to be married, really?"

"Stop!" Peggy cried. "Honestly, Jimmy, we haven't a laugh left in us."

"I'll sue you!" the defeated gold digger screamed. "You've broken the law with a fake ceremony."

"No, you won't!" Daniel said. "You haven't a witness. Every one here is prejudiced. We'll all go into court and swear that you've said just what you've said."

"You can keep your jewelry. You've done mighty well, at that," Peggy announced. "Now, dad, just in case the question should come up, I have here a blank check, made payable to the order of Daniel Jouvard. You are to fill in the amount and sign your name. I think you had better turn over to Daniel every dollar you have left. It's rightfully his, anyway. And here is a deed to the farm, transferring the title to his name. You're to sign that, too."

"Well," her relieved father said, "I'd much rather make the check payable to you, and have the deed in your name. I want to do what is right, but—"

"Put them both in her name," Daniel interrupted.

"The name," Peggy said, "just as soon as Jimmy can pop around and bring his father here, is going to be Mrs. Daniel Jouvard. We've got the license. Write it plainly, dad."

Mr. McAllister looked twenty years younger.

"Peggy," he said, "you are the boss. Hereafter, I take orders from you. All I want is peace."

Bubbles Winslow took this golden opportunity to slip away from the scene. With a clicking of heels, she was gone.

They heard the whir of the starter on the eight-cylinder car. The exhaust went *whoosh!*

They ran into the yard. A tail-light re-

ceded swiftly from their vision and vanished into the night.

"My car!" Mr. McAllister wailed.

"A little truck," Daniel said, "is going to be much better suited to our needs."

"My clothes!" Mr. McAllister cried.

"You won't need them on a chicken farm," Peggy pointed out.

"Or a hog ranch," the pirate's descendant put in.

"When you want to get all dressed up," Peggy said, "you can slip into a nice clean pair of overalls. You'll discard your stick for a hoe, and your nice creamy spats for a pair of galoshes. The family crest, darling, is no longer a bottle of gin under a pair of crossed lobsters, but a Long Island duckling rampant on a field of Berkshire hogs."

THE END

### THE CAPTURE

He wore a star on his forehead, a star of unearthly white,  
And they laid traps for that stallion, they laid traps day and night;  
He broke free from Texas Johnny and from Daredevil Cheyenne Bill—  
And one could rope the lightning, one hold a cyclone still!  
He escaped from New Mexico Monte and from Arizona Ike;  
As grass their lassoes sundered: men never knew his like!

Now Frisco Joe was so crafty he could stroke a rattlesnake straight;  
He said: "The man that 'll catch him will have to learn how to wait,  
To rest when he rests, to hike when he hikes, and go wherever he goes  
All day from the time when the dawn makes the east one great red rose;  
Yes, all through the long day's burning, and all through the starry night,  
Never to give him a let-up, but to track him, traveling light!  
And since there's never a lasso can bring the beast to a stand,  
I'll try a bit of patience, and keep a halter at hand!"

So Frisco took after Star-Face while the boys laughed loud and long:  
"Joe's only a man with two feet, and a horse's four legs are strong;  
Joe talks like a fool and braggart, for Star-Face can run like the wind,  
Outspeeding the hungry wolf pack, and leaving the storm behind."

They started close to the Border; to the Territory Line  
Joe followed that horse unflinching—and Star-Face gave never a sign  
Of knowing that he was followed; he would loaf, and graze, and play  
While Frisco Joe kept after day upon ceaseless day:

Along the plains of Kansas where the Kaw holds its turbid course  
The moon looked down in wonder at a man that followed a horse;  
Through the Barren Lands of Dakota, with his grub in a dusty bag,  
Joe tracked him: At last the stallion began to worry and lag.

What was this thing that trailed him? What kind of man could it be  
That went with him as the sky does, or the wind that wanders free?  
That never threw a lasso, but followed, from place to place—  
Then fear came over the creature—fear, and he quickened his pace:  
Then fear came over Star-Face, and he lit out straight as a die  
To get where the sun goes under and burst clear through the sky;

And he never stopped for drinking, and he never stayed to feed—  
And the madness of being followed forever brought down his speed;  
He dwindled for lack of water, from famine his feet grew slack:  
And he gave his head to the halter without once fighting back!

Harry Kemp



# Home Fires

## TEMPERAMENTAL HOUSEKEEPING MAY HAVE ITS DISADVANTAGES, ESPECIALLY IN A TWO-FAMILY HOUSE

By Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

IT was a long way home, and a lonely way, along a road of frozen mud, bordered by empty fields and trees stripped bare in the autumn winds. The short November day was coming to a close, and the fields seemed vast in the gathering dusk. Only at the top of the hill lingered a streak of wild, unearthly yellow light, in a sky of flying clouds.

Bess climbed the hill steadily, her eyes fixed upon that transient glory; and she repeated to herself bits of poems she had learned in school:

"Count that day lost whose low descending sun  
Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

A most characteristic sentiment! The frosty air had brought a fine color into her cheeks, and her hair, in the sunset light, shone like copper where the wind had blown it loose under her tam-o'-shanter. She was a solitary little figure in a desolate world, but invincibly gallant and earnest.

At an early age she had become enamored of Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life," and her diary was prefaced by the quotation:

Life is real! Life is earnest!

She had always felt like that. She had been left motherless when she was a very tiny girl, and the chief influence of her childhood had been that of her father, a man whom nobody could accuse of undue frivolity. He believed that life was real, and earnest, and pretty awful—especially now, when he was a ruined man.

Bess, however, being only nineteen, could not see things quite as he did. She was very grave about the situation, and desperately anxious to help him. Just now she was on her way home from the village post office, where she had mailed a letter

to an old school friend, politely but firmly refusing an invitation for a week-end. She realized that things were very bad, but she could not help thinking that they might take a better turn at any time.

Her father thought this attitude half-hearted. He was a ruined man, and he wished to do the thing thoroughly—wished to be completely and properly a ruined man. He refused to cherish any illusions, any false hopes. When ruin came, he had sold their old house in Connecticut, and they had moved into the lower half of a two-family building in a New Jersey suburb. Bess suffered quite as much as he did from this uprooting, only she pretended to like it, so that he should not reproach himself so bitterly. Whenever the least thing went wrong, he would say in his most hopeless voice that all this was entirely his fault.

As a matter of fact, it was. He was a professor who had written philosophic essays, pointing out the pitiful follies of the human race, and he should have known better than to trust persons who were enthusiastic about oil wells. He did know better now, but it was too late.

Bess had almost reached the top of the hill now, and a ray of the sun, shining upon a broken bottle, sidetracked her thoughts. It looked like a piece of ice.

"I bet there's skating," she thought.

She thought of last winter—only last winter—and of all the girls skating on the little lake in the school grounds. In her heart there echoed the sound of their laughing voices, the strange, ringing hum of skates on ice. She could feel again her own quiet content in the companionship of her friends, the satisfaction of an orderly and purposeful life.

"But all that was just—a preparation,"

she said to herself, valiantly. "This is the real thing. I'm really useful now."

She repeated her very favorite verse:

"Let us then be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait."

That was what she intended to do, certainly. The pursuing and laboring part was not so hard, but the waiting—

## II

THE sound of a car coming along the road made Bess draw to one side. Very few cars came here, and she was a little curious about it. She glanced up as it passed, and then stared after it, amazed.

It was what looked like the wreck of a fine touring car, battered and scarred, but with an engine that took the steep hill superbly. It was piled high with household goods. A man was driving it, on the running board crouched another man, and, perilously balanced upon a table wedged into the tonneau, there sat a woman. She was laughing, and the brightness of her face lingered in the girl's mind.

As they disappeared over the crest of the hill, a lamp shade fell out of the car. Bess was hastening forward to retrieve it, but, before she got there, one of the men appeared. He picked it up, and then something arrested his attention.

"Hi! Just come here!" he called, and the two others joined him.

They all stood there, as if entranced with the view; and Bess, as she passed them, heard the woman say something about "the austere charm of all this." She was somewhat surprised, and very much impressed, to learn that any one could find charm of any sort in these barren fields, where great billboards stood, declaring them to be highly desirable building lots. She felt that she herself should have discovered this charm in the six weeks she had been here.

But now she observed something which the others had not seen. They had their backs turned to the car, which stood halfway down the slope, and they did not know that it had begun to slip. Bess called an anxious warning, but they were talking, and did not hear; and the top-heavy car was slowly gathering momentum.

"Oh, do look out!" she cried. "It's running away!"

It was. Oblivious of brakes, it went careering down the hill, faster and faster, bumping over the ruts, and flinging out all sorts of things as it went. The others had heard her, now, and turned, and they all began rushing after it.

Too late! Going at great speed, the car smashed squarely into the stump of a tree, stood up on its hind feet, and threw a great part of its load over its head. Then it stood still and waited.

Bess was the first to reach the scene of disaster, and she was dismayed. There was a little red lacquer cabinet in splinters; there were books with the pages fluttering away; a china clock was shattered to pieces; the ground was strewn with wreckage.

"Oh, what a pity!" she cried. "I'm so sorry! Such pretty things!"

"Never mind!" said the woman, cheerfully. "Some of them were broken, anyhow; and I don't believe in caring too much about things, do you?"

Struck by this philosophic point of view, Bess turned toward the speaker, and found her still smiling. She was not a pretty woman. She was small and pale and freckled, and her reddish hair was growing gray; but that smile of hers was a thing rarer than youth or beauty.

"I like her!" thought Bess.

The two men had begun to stow the debris into the car in a way that caused anguish to the girl's orderly spirit.

"Have you much farther to go?" she asked anxiously. "Because, if the things are packed like that, I'm afraid they'll fall out."

"My dear," said the woman, "I don't know how far it is. I took the place, in blind faith, from an agent. It's No. 9 Edgely Road."

"Oh, but that's right there!" cried Bess, pointing. "That house, where I live!"

"A two-family house, isn't it? Well, my dear, we're the second family, then!" said the woman, very much pleased, and she called out joyously: "Tom Tench! Alan! I've found the place!"

The two men approached. They also seemed surprised and pleased.

"As if she'd done something very clever," thought Bess. "Didn't they ever expect to find their house?"

"My dear," said the woman, "I'm Angelina Smith. This is my brother Alan, and my cousin, Tom Tench. Boys, im-

agine! This is the young lady who lives in the house!"

Both the men took off their hats and smiled at her.

"Shall we move the things in now?" asked the cousin, a somewhat portly young man, in horn-rimmed spectacles.

"Or will it bother you?" asked Miss Smith.

Bess was disconcerted to see that they regarded her as a sort of hostess.

"Just as you like, of course," she said.

"I—can't I help you?"

"No!" replied the brother, promptly.

"We can get along all right."

Bess glanced at him, but looked away again, hastily. There was something in his steady, smiling gaze that confused her. He did not look much like his sister. She was little, and he was tall. Her hair was reddish, and his was black. He had the same wide, good-humored smile, but somehow it was different.

"It's getting dark," he said, "and it's cold. You'd better run home."

Bess might have felt a little annoyed by his rather masterful manner, if she had not noticed, as he moved to pick up a book, that he walked with a limp; but that disarmed her. She liked him; she liked all of them; there was something charming and a little pathetic about them.

"Won't you all come in and have a cup of tea with us first?" she asked, strictly upon impulse.

"My dear!" cried Miss Smith. "How kind of you! We will!"

And they all followed her to the house, leaving the hapless car just where it was.

Bess knocked upon the door, to warn her father. He opened it with the distressed air of a disturbed hermit.

"Father," said Bess, "these are our new neighbors. Miss Smith, my father, Professor Gayle."

Miss Smith held out her hand, and the professor took it. She presented her cousin and her brother, and they all shook hands gravely.

"But how cozy!" she exclaimed, looking about her.

"Ah! Yes! Yes! Yes!" said Professor Gayle.

"Cozy" seemed a tactful word for that sitting room. When Bess and her father left their old home, they had brought with them what they had regarded, at the time, as just a few pieces of their old furniture;

but in this room the things had become too many and too large.

Bess knew that the crowded room hurt her father not only aesthetically, but physically. He was a big, gaunt man, very near-sighted, and almost every time he moved his shins struck some sharp angle, or something bumped him under the knees. When he made one of his fine, sweeping gestures—sweeping, it truly was—it carried to the floor all sorts of things from near-by tables.

But Miss Smith was entranced.

"Really a home!" said she. "You know, we all suddenly felt the need of a home, ourselves, last week. It was at breakfast in the studio. Alan said, 'Christmas will soon be here.' 'What does Christmas mean to us, who have no home?' Tom Tench inquired. 'Boys,' I said, 'you shall have a home!' So, you see!"

"Ah, yes!" said the professor, vaguely. Bess had gone off to make tea, and he was obliged to entertain the party alone. He scarcely felt equal to it. "You said 'studio'?" he continued. "Am I to understand that you are—er—an artist, Miss Smith?"

"All of us! I paint, and Tom Tench writes, and Alan designs. We're very quiet people," she assured him. "We shan't disturb you in the least."

"I'm sure," said the professor, gallantly.

And he really did feel that, if he must have neighbors, these were remarkably unobjectionable ones—no children, no dogs, and he fancied that they were not the sort to possess a loud speaker.

He was still further encouraged when Tom Tench pulled a book from one of the shelves, and gave a stern and loud opinion upon it. That was the kind of thing the professor was accustomed to, and he immediately pronounced a loud and scholarly contradiction. Then he and Miss Smith and Tom Tench all began to talk about books. No one of them had any use for the books praised by the others, but that made it all the more interesting.

They did not miss the brother. He had followed Bess into the kitchen, and he said he wished to help her. She told him that there was really nothing that he could do, but still he stayed there. He sat on the end of the table, and talked to her.

His conversation was not scholarly. He did not talk about books. He talked about plays, and Bess had never seen anything except a few Shakespearean dramas. He

talked about dancing, and Bess had never danced, except at school. Her particular friends had been very serious girls, and her father was invariably serious; she was not accustomed to frivolous conversation, and she could not answer Mr. Smith. After awhile he gave up and fell silent.

That night, after she had gone to bed, Bess lay awake for a time in the dark. She endeavored to think of the future, and to decide whether she could study shorthand by mail; but her thinking was unaccountably disturbed by the memory of that young man, with his steady, smiling glance and his very insignificant conversation. Somehow, it made her unhappy.

### III

THE new neighbors worked late into the night, with a great deal of noise, and in the morning a van came with more furniture. Bess went upstairs, to ask if she could help, but Miss Smith thanked her warmly, said that moving meant nothing at all to her, and invited Bess and her father to come up and dine with them that evening notwithstanding the unplaced furniture.

The professor, to his daughter's surprise, seemed pleased by the invitation.

"It is something of an experience to meet genuine artists," he said. "It will do us good. Miss Smith is, I consider, a remarkable woman. I had a talk with her yesterday, and the extent of her information is great."

"She forgot to tell me what time to come," said Bess; "but if we go up early—a little before six—perhaps I can help her."

When they went up, it might have been a little before six in the morning, for any sign of dinner to be seen. Miss Smith, in a smock, was busy drawing; Tom Tench was shut up in his room, writing, and all the other rooms were in darkness.

"You won't mind waiting until I finish this?" she asked. "It's a design for a book jacket. It's not at all what they ordered, and probably they won't take it; but it seems criminal to me to stifle a good idea. Tom Tench won't be long now. He makes a point of writing at least twenty-five hundred words a day. He *will* do that much, even if he's not in the mood, and has to tear it all up."

"I see!" said Bess, politely. "But, Miss Smith, you're so busy—please let me go into the kitchen and get things started for you. I'd really love to."

"My dear, I don't use the kitchen," Miss Smith replied, calmly.

"Don't use the kitchen!" repeated the dinner guests in unison.

"Never!" said she. "For busy people like ourselves, housekeeping has to be reduced to the utmost simplicity. I've worked it all out. You'll see! The dinner will be prepared here, in this room, before your very eyes. It won't take me any time at all."

She continued to work, and to entertain them with pleasant conversation until half past six. Then she rose, and, with a calm and efficient air, went to a cupboard and brought out a number of electric appliances—grill, percolator, toaster, and so on—which she placed upon her cleared work table, and began to attach to the chandelier outlets.

"Pray let me assist you," said the professor, greatly distressed by what he saw, for the plugs were screwed in askew, the cords wildly tangled, and the chandelier rocking dangerously.

She smilingly declined assistance, but when her back was turned, he did what he could for the safety and welfare of the party.

"But why," he whispered to his daughter, "does she keep the window open? It's a cold night, and I find the draft is becoming most unpleasant."

Bess crossed the room to Miss Smith, who was leaning out of the open window, and once more asked if she couldn't help her.

"It's a l-little imp-provised ice box," said the hostess, with chattering teeth. "I nailed it up this morning."

To Bess it seemed extraordinary to improvise an ice box outside the window when there was a genuine one in the kitchen; but she was beginning to understand Miss Smith, and could not help admiring her adventurous spirit, which wished to live like *Robinson Crusoe*, always improving, if not improving.

"The meat!" whispered Miss Smith. "It's frozen fast! I can't get it off the plate, or the plate off the shelf!"

But, alas, she did get her ice box off the nails, and down it went into the garden below.

"Never mind, my dear!" she said. "Don't say anything about it; I'm always prepared for emergencies."

So she closed the window, retired into



another room, and came back with a number of tins.

"Tom Tench!" she called. "Get ready! Dinner in ten minutes!"

It was, however, nearly nine o'clock before they dined. Miss Smith had trouble with her forest of electric cords, and never knew which things were turned on and which off, so that the concoctions which she believed to be cooling began to burn directly her back was turned, and the pots which she was anxiously expecting to boil would be found, after a long wait, to have been standing upon stoves absolutely cold.

Young Smith was a model of cheerful patience. He came in cold and hungry, and uncomplainingly remained cold and hungry for a long time. The professor was courteously serene through everything, and Bess and Angelina were unfailingly good-tempered; but Tom Tench was otherwise. He was silent all through the meal; and, after it had been eaten, and the ruins hidden behind a screen, he made himself felt. It was then that the bitter Tench-Gayle feud began.

"It's darned cold!" he muttered, in a surly fashion.

"Bitter weather," the professor agreed.

"I mean the *house* is cold," said Tench, with a frown. "There's not enough heat. The furnace needs looking after. Doesn't somebody stoke it up in the evening?"

Now that furnace was the professor's *bête noire*. He had not been able to get a man to look after it, and he had said that he believed he could do it himself. He was not so sure about it now, though, and this humiliating knowledge, combined with just resentment at the other's tone, caused him to reply with considerable asperity:

"It might be advisable to put on more coal. Perhaps we might so arrange that I should attend to it in the morning, and you should see to it—"

"I?" said Tom Tench. "Not much! I'm a writer. My business is to write, and I have no time for anything else."

"Mr. Tench—" the professor began sternly, but young Smith rose.

"I'll have a go at it," he said, cheerfully, and off he went.

But it was too late. The harm was done; the feud had started. Tom Tench strode off and shut himself into his own room, and Miss Smith interested the professor in a discussion of Hindu myths.

She was, Bess thought, the kindest, the jolliest, the most utterly honest, and unaffected soul who ever lived, but she could not dispel the sinister cloud that had come over them. There was tension in the air.

Mr. Smith did not come back. Bess watched the door and listened for a footstep, but none came. At last she slipped out, without disturbing the other two, and went downstairs—not exactly to look for Mr. Smith, of course; but something might have happened to him. He might have fallen down the cellar stairs, he might have been overcome by coal gas.

The lower floor was very quiet. She listened, hesitated for a moment, and then opened the cellar door. A light was burning down there, but there was not a sound to be heard. Cautiously she began to descend the steep stairs—and there she saw the young man, sitting on a box, smoking a pipe, and reading a very frivolous comic magazine.

"Oh!" said she.

He sprang to his feet and came toward her, quickly enough, in spite of his limp.

"I'm waiting to see what will happen," he explained. "I've done things to that furnace!"

He stood there, smiling up at her, and she felt obliged to smile back at him, but it was not easy.

"If he'd rather stay in the cellar," she thought, "there's no reason why he shouldn't—absolutely no reason. I'm sure—"

"Look here!" said Mr. Smith, suddenly. "Couldn't we go into the city to dinner some evening?"

A great indignation came over Bess, and a sort of alarm. Young Smith was not smiling now; he seemed earnest enough—too earnest. Nobody had ever looked at her like that before. He had preferred to hide in the cellar, rather than talk to her upstairs; and now, when she had come, merely out of humanity, to see if he were dead or alive, he misunderstood her. He thought she was one of those girls who would jump at any invitation, however casual. He thought she was running after him.

"Thank you," she said, frigidly; "but I don't care for things like that."

Then she turned and went up the stairs. She went into the kitchen and made a cup of cocoa for her father to drink before he went to bed.

"I hope I've made him see!" she thought.

Suddenly she was overwhelmed by a recollection of Mr. Smith's face, after she had spoken. She remembered him standing there at the foot of the cellar stairs, with a smudge on his cheek, and such a contrite, miserable look in his blue eyes.

"Oh!" she cried. "I'm nothing but a n-nasty little prig!"

#### IV

THE feud over the furnace developed with alarming rapidity.

"In a house of this sort," the professor observed severely to his child, a week later, "which is not adapted to the complete independence of two families, if the arrangement is to be tolerable, there must be a ready and harmonious adjustment of the responsibilities. Now this Tench—the other young man is away most of the time, and it is the natural, just, and proper thing for this Tench to do his share in taking care of the furnace."

But "this Tench" steadily refused to do anything but write. He never went near the furnace. Miss Smith pluckily attempted to do his part. Three or four times a day she descended into the cellar, crammed the grate with coal, turned on or off whatever little turnable things she saw, and opened and closed all the doors, with great good will. Not only was this repugnant to Professor Gayle's innate chivalry, but it was dangerous, and he implored so earnestly that finally she desisted, and the professor did it all. Alone he carried up the ashes, alone he intrigued with coal dealers.

When Miss Smith's reckless management of her electric devices caused a fuse to blow out—which happened often—Tench simply lighted a lamp. He didn't care.

Then there was the daily battle about the mail. The postman left all letters for the house with whatever person opened the door, and the professor, being on the ground floor, was usually that person. Now Tom Tench had all an author's morbid attitude about mail. Whenever he thought a letter should have come, and it had not, he made general accusations of criminal carelessness. At last he took to walking out to meet the postman, and then the professor accused him of willful delay in the transmission of highly important documents.

But it was in the matter of waste paper that Tom Tench was most insufferable. He was always bringing down heaps of paper, and stuffing it into the ash can. On windy days it blew out all over the garden; but there was a still more serious aspect to this offense.

"Mr. Tench, sir!" protested the professor. "As you have persistently shirked your duty in helping me to carry up those ashes, you may not be aware that sometimes they are hot, and liable to set fire to any inflammable material placed upon them. Tie your—*rubbish*—into bundles, if you please, ready for the collector."

"No time for that sort of nonsense," said Tench, and kept on.

No attempt was made to gloss over this hostility. The professor had not had a quarrel for years, and it seemed to Bess that he actually enjoyed this one. He would not make the least effort to avoid Tench. Almost every evening he went upstairs for a chat with Miss Smith, and his manner of ignoring Tench was not soothing.

"Oh, Lord!" Tom Tench would rudely ejaculate.

Then he would go into his room and bang the door; but he would not stay there. He would come in and out of the sitting room, with an obnoxious smile.

If the two men enjoyed this, however, Bess and Angelina Smith did not. They had grown very fond of each other, and they said that this distressing situation did not and should not make the least difference in their friendship. Angelina held that it was all the fault of her temperamental cousin, Tom Tench, and that poor Professor Gayle was an innocent victim; while Bess thought secretly that her father, being older and wiser, should have avoided such an antagonism.

"But it does seem a pity," she said once, "that—your brother has to suffer for it. He seems to work so hard, and he comes home late, and half the time the house is freezing cold, or the lights are out, because they're squabbling about whose place it is to do things."

"Oh, Alan doesn't mind," Miss Smith assured her. "He's the most good-natured, darling creature! He doesn't need to work so hard, either. My dear, he stays late at his office simply because he doesn't like to come home. He told me so."

Bess decided then that it would be more

sensible not to bother about Mr. Smith, especially if he stayed late in his office simply because he didn't want to come home. That meant, of course, that there was no one in the two-family house he wished to talk to, no one he cared to see. She had scarcely exchanged a word with him since that brief conversation on the cellar stairs. Sometimes she saw him from her window, going off in that dreadful old car, early, before any one else was stirring upstairs, probably without having had a proper breakfast. At night she often heard him come in late, to be greeted brightly by his sister, who never seemed to go to bed.

To be sure, she had meant to discourage him, and apparently she had succeeded. Very well—what of it? She had made up her mind to be a little nicer the next time she talked to him, but evidently there wasn't going to be any next time. Again very well—what of it?

He was Angelina's brother, and a neighbor, and as such she was obliged, was she not, to take a human interest in him? She learned that he was a naval architect, and that he had hurt his foot by falling down a ship's hold during a visit of inspection. She also learned that he was the best brother in the world. She was pleased to hear this, and pleased to think that that pathetic limp would soon be gone, so that it would no longer be necessary to feel sorry for him; but she was not going to bother about him.

## V

THE week before Christmas was one of terrific activity for Bess and Angelina, and of unusually bitter hostility between Professor Gayle and Tom Tench. They were shamefully immune from any sort of Christmas spirit.

Indeed, it seemed impossible to arrange any sort of neighborly celebration. Bess had made mince pies and a plum pudding; Angelina had painted place cards to be used on the dinner table. They had both planned all sorts of jolly little Christmas presents, and a Christmas tree; but where was the gathering to be? Tom Tench refused to set foot in Professor Gayle's domain; and though the professor could probably be induced to go upstairs, who could foresee the consequences?

Nevertheless, the two dauntless women refused to despair.

"At the very last instant we'll find some

way to reconcile them," said Angelina. "We'll have a wonderful Christmas—I know it! Let's walk into the village this afternoon, and get quantities of holly and mistletoe. Why, my dear, it's Christmas Eve! They can't quarrel to-day. Nobody could!"

"They can, though," said Bess, sadly. "I hear them now, out on the stairs."

"It's a shame!" said Angelina. "Of course, Tom Tench is *very* temperamental, but—my dear, I'm going to have one more talk with him this evening. Alan talked to him, but he only made it worse."

"What did he say?"

"He said, my dear, that any one who could be boorish and ill tempered under the same roof as *you* was a—well, all sorts of things."

"Oh! Did he?" said Bess, after a long silence.

"And he wants us to move away," Angelina continued. "He says he simply can't stand this."

"Oh!" said Bess again.

Something in her voice touched the warm-hearted Angelina. She crossed the room and put her arm about the younger girl.

"My dear," she said, "I'm not going to leave you. I'm much too fond of you. And—if you don't mind my saying so—I really do think you need somebody cheerful here. Alan said it was absolutely my duty to teach you to laugh. He thinks—"

"It's getting late, Angelina," said Bess. "Let's start!"

It was getting late, because Angelina had been suddenly inspired to finish a drawing after lunch, and it was after three before they set off for the village. When they had bought all the holly they could carry, and turned toward home, it was beginning to grow dark.

It was a bleak and bitter day. The wind was against them now—a savage wind that brought tears to their eyes. With their heads down against it, they went along the desolate road, their numb hands clasping the prickly holly, their numb feet suffering cruelly from the ruts frozen as hard as iron.

They came to the foot of the long hill—and how long it looked, that treeless road, going steeply up to meet the wild, dark sky!

"It 'll be—better—going down!" Bess shouted against the gale.

"Much!" cried Angelina. "And—I love Christmas!"

Bess could have kissed her for those gallant words. The good will she felt for her companion actually seemed to warm her, and she began the ascent doggedly. Shoulder to shoulder, on they went, nearer and nearer to home. They reached the top of the hill, where the wind was incredibly fierce, and—

Angelina dropped her load of holly and seized Bess's arm.

"Look!" she cried. "Oh, look! Fire!"

And there was the two-family house in a horrible, reddish glare!

Of one accord they started running, battling against the wind. For a time Bess clung to her armful of holly, because she so hated throwing things away, but in the end it had to go. Their footsteps rang sharply on the frozen road. They were breathless and panting, but the world about them seemed strangely still—no shouts, no hurrying engines, no audible excitement. The two-family house was burning in solitary and awful splendor.

Angelina stumbled to her knees at the foot of the hill, and Bess helped her up. They heard the soft, rustling sound of flames, mounting unhindered.

"Where—is—everybody?" gasped Angelina. "Oh, Bess!"

They struggled on, and turned in at the gate. The front of the building was still untouched, and no one was there. They flew along the path to the back of the house. Two figures were standing there, motionless, sharply outlined against the red light—Professor Gayle and Tom Tench.

"Father!" cried Bess, with all the breath she had left. "Can't you do *anything*?"

He answered in a voice that was positively ferocious:

"No! This is Mr. Tench's fire. He is responsible, and he alone. His papers thrown upon the hot ashes—"

"Tom Tench!" cried Angelina, catching her cousin's arm and shaking him. "Do something! This instant!"

"I won't!" said he. "The fire started downstairs, on Gayle's premises, and it was his business to check it."

"It has spread to your premises. Put it out there, and—"

"You'll begin," said Tom Tench.

"I shall not!" said the professor. "I'll be—I won't!"

And they kept on doing nothing, in spite of the desperate appeals and entreaties, the wrath and despair, of Angelina and Bess.

"Then we will!" cried Angelina.

Followed by Bess, she ran around to the front of the house and up the steps of the veranda. She was just opening the door when she was seized by the arm and spun around.

"I'm here," said her brother. "Don't worry!"

To the surprise and indignation of Bess, the mere fact of her brother's being there seemed to reassure Angelina entirely. She sat down on the rail of the veranda with a sigh of relief.

"Alan's very practical!" she observed, with satisfaction.

But that did not suit Bess. She was not going to leave the fate of all their household goods in the hands of Mr. Smith. She opened the door and went in.

"Come back!" shouted Alan, but she closed the door behind her.

It was very much worse in there than she had expected. The hall was thick with smoke that stifled and blinded her. She groped her way toward the sitting room, with the desperate idea of saving at least an armful of her father's precious books; but a few steps were enough. There was death for her there. Tears were streaming from her smarting eyes, and every breath was a fiery torment.

In a panic, she turned back. All she wanted now was to get out, to draw one breath of cold, clear air; but the room was a trap, overcrowded as it was with massive furniture. Stumbling and panic-stricken, she turned this way and that. She could not find the door. She could not get out. She tripped over something and fell.

Alan Smith lifted her up. She clung to him in that dreadful, choking darkness. She felt his strong arm about her, and heard his voice, cheerful and steady.

"All right! Don't worry!"

"Father's books!" she whispered.

And then the smoke came down and shut out all the world.

## VI

THE village fire apparatus had done its best, and departed, and the tenants of the two-family house were assembled in the Gayles's sitting room, dejected, weary, and silent. Bess lay on the sofa, still weak and



shaken. Angelina was looking over a mass of sodden papers which had once been a portfolio of drawings, and the professor was helping her. Tom Tench sat hunched in an armchair, staring gloomily before him.

The curtains were scorched rags. Through a hole chopped in the ceiling water was still dripping, and the room was devastated; but the worst damage had occurred upstairs. The flames from Tom Tench's papers heaped upon the ash can had mounted upward, and had caught the curtains at a window that happened to be open. It was bad enough down here, but upstairs there was stark ruin.

"I wonder where Alan is," said Angelina. "He drove down to the village—to buy something, I suppose; but it's so late!"

"As a matter of fact," Tom Tench told her curtly, "he went to find a doctor. He was hurt."

"Hurt!" cried Angelina and Bess together. "Hurt!" they repeated.

"That's what I said. He hurt himself. He came back in here—in this jungle—this old curiosity shop—"

"Mr. Tench!" said the professor.

"Oh, it's your room," said Tench. "If you like it this way—but Alan fell over one of these antique doodads and cut his head."

"Boys!" cried Miss Smith, greatly distressed. "Boys!"

The professor glanced up. It was a long time since he had been classified as a boy, and it was pleasing.

"Miss Smith!" he said.

Bess sat up straight. Was it possible? The way her father and Miss Smith were looking at each other!

"I didn't mean—" Angelina began, somewhat confused, and then: "But it's true!" she said. "You really are—both of you—but there's Alan!"

The front door opened, and just at that moment there came from upstairs the most pathetic, tired little voice. It was the cuckoo clock.

"Midnight!" cried Alan. "Look here! Merry Christmas, you people!"

The words might have been a charm, striking every one speechless. They could only look at him, as he stood in the doorway, a bandage around his head, his collar a wet and dirty rag, his face white with fatigue and pain, and a wide grin on it.

"Oh, Alan!" cried his sister. "My

dear, dear boy! Your new set of plans—for that yacht—they're burned up!"

It seemed to Bess that he winced a little, but it was almost imperceptible.

"Then we may starve yet," he said; "but, anyhow, we're all right for the present. Look at this!"

He held out a package that he was carrying. Bess took it from him, and opened it gingerly.

"But—" she said.

"It's the best sort of plum pudding there is," he said. "I only wish I could have got a bigger one. You'll like it, all right!"

She stood looking at the round tin in her hands.

"But I'm afraid," she said, "it—it must be a mistake. You see, it says—" She looked up at him, and her eyes filled with tears. It was *too* pathetic! His head bandaged, his plans destroyed, his home in ruins, and now this! "It says 'corned beef'!" she faltered.

Then she could bear no more. Taking the corned beef, she ran into the kitchen, and began to cry there.

Alan came after her. He put his arm about her shoulders, but, this being the second time, she did not seem to notice it very much.

"I am s-so s-sorry!" she wailed.

"Please don't be!" he entreated. "Two-family houses are a mistake, anyhow. I've been staying late at the office, trying my hand at designing a house, for a change. I wish you'd look at the plans!"

"I think I'll make some coffee," said Bess, hastily, moving away. Then her glance fell again upon the tin of corned beef.

She looked at him, and their eyes met, and she began to laugh.

"You little angel!" he cried. "I've never seen you do that before!"

"I've just learned," said Bess, still laughing.

They had a good deal more to say. They took a very long time in getting a very simple supper; but nobody tried to hurry them. Nobody seemed at all impatient. Indeed, when Bess came in with a tray, they all smiled at her in a new sort of way, as if they, too, had been somehow touched by her gay young laughter.

Nothing could have been more festive than that supper of coffee and corned beef, eaten under a ceiling that still dripped, in

a room with a broken windowpane stuffed with rags, and heaps of charred debris from upstairs piled in the corners. The wind howled outside, but nobody cared.

The professor rose to his feet.

"This," he said, "is Christmas Day; and in some respects I may say that it is a—for me, personally—a merry one. I should like to take this occasion to say—Mr. Tom

Tench, sir, your cousin, Miss Smith, has—er—shown me an example of—of—" He hesitated for a moment. "Mr. Tench, sir!" he said. "Your hand!"

Tom Tench sprang up and took the proffered hand in a vigorous clasp.

"Gayle!" he said. "Gayle! I—I think I'll run down and take a look at that furnace!"

## A Farewell Tour

A HUMAN EPIC OF TICKFALL—THE STORY OF "DE NIGGER AN' DE MULE," ONE AND INSEPARABLE, NOW AND PERHAPS FOREVER

By E. K. Means

"**I** AIN'T gwine do no wuck to-day. I belongs to de Sawsiety of de Folded Hands."

Sitting in the door of a cabin in the heart of the Little Moccasin Swamp, old Harney Shake surveyed his lonely surroundings. He occupied a two-room cabin with a porch in front; a chimney made of mud and cypress slabs at one end; a china-berry tree and a rusty wash basin at the other.

"Water, come an' wet me; sun, come an' dry me; go away, purty gal, don't come anigh me!" Harney sang, and the quavering tones of the eighty-year-old negro echoed back from the great jungle. "Dat's tol'able loud singin' fer a ole octogeranium like me," he remarked to himself complacently, as he proceeded to fill a vile pipe with ill-smelling tobacco.

As he struck a match, the warm glow illuminated face and hands black and withered like the hull of a walnut, a body bent with age, a toothless mouth, and an ancient head white with wool which fitted the old negro's cranium like a skullcap.

The trousers he wore looked almost as old as the man himself; faded and ragged, and covered with swamp mud, torn and patched in a hundred different places. His shirt was of such indescribable raggedness, and so soiled, that a swamp hog would

have retreated from it in disgust. By the side of his chair, upon the floor, was an old wool hat, which had been exposed to sun and rain so long that the nap had worn off and the fiber had turned brick-red.

Harney was perfectly happy in his loneliness and isolation. For twenty years he had been a solitary dweller in that lonely cabin, making his living by hunting and fishing. When food was short in the cabin, he appeared in Tickfall and "picked the town," showing up like a dilapidated scarecrow, with his wool hat held out beseechingly for a contribution of small coins to meet his immediate needs. He lived as simply as an Indian, never knew sickness, had few necessities, and did not know what a luxury was.

Into the simplicity of his existence there came Skeeter Butts and Little Bit, bearing a letter.

"Dis here letter is fer you, Harney," Skeeter said, as he extended it to the old man. "It wus put in a yenvelope an' sent to me, because de feller whut wrote it knowed I could find you."

"Nobody ain't got sense enough to write to me, excusin' my own gal," Harney replied, showing but slight interest in the epistle. "Dis am de fust letter I ever got from any pusson, white or black."

"You done guessed correct," Skeeter

told him. "Dis letter is from yo' gal whut lives up Nawth."

"Whut do she say she wants?" Harney asked, glancing at the letter without comprehension, for he could not read.

"She wants you to come up Nawth an' live wid her," Skeeter said.

"Huh! She wants me to come up Nawth an' suppute her," Harney grunted.

Skeeter's statement was a free interpretation of the letter, which read in full as follows:

Dadd this Come to tell you that i ant well at all. i Ben in the Bed Sick evey sence Xmas night with my ear and i am Weake in my Back. i am Got a Job but have Ben Sick and they ant pay me What they oh me. But Will Work On for Them as swoon as i Get So i Can work. i am going Rite Back to Work if they Pleas. Send me something for my Back. i am Shore Sick. i Cant get no one to Work in my Place whild i am sick. come to see me. someThing might Happing to me.

Yos,

DINKY.

As the meaning of the letter slowly percolated through Harney's skull, there was a gradual change in his appearance. Into his face there came a look of eager anticipation, his shoulders slowly straightened, and his voice took a new note.

"I aims to leave dis here swamp to-day, Skeeter," he said. "I's plumb wore out, scourin' kittles, an' fryin' catfish, an' nussin' little squealish baby pigs, an' peddlin' smelly fishes aroun'. I craves never to see dis here old log cabin agin. I's gwine whar niggers is knowed at deir true wuth, an' I'll make my grave up Nawth amongst my own people!"

"Is you got de money to buy yo' ticket to match yo' travel itch?" Skeeter asked.

"Shore!" Harney declared. "I been savin' up my money fer my ole age, an' now is come de properest time fer me to spend it."

"All right, Harney," Skeeter said, as he rose to go. "Want me to do any last kind deed to he'p you git off?"

"Dar is jes' one noble ack dat I muss ax of you," Harney replied, after thinking a moment. "I kin pack eve'ything I owns in my gripsack an' take it wid me, excusin' my mule."

"You want me to keep dat mule fer you until you gits back?" Skeeter asked.

"Naw! howled Harney, with the petulance of old age. "I ain't never comin' back! I wants you to auction dat mule

off at de nex' cote day, an' send me de money dat you gits fer him."

"Twon't be much," Skeeter said, glancing disdainfully at the animal, which stood in a near-by pen, and whose age and feebleness were so extreme that he had to lean up against a tree to think.

"He ain't wuth much," Harney agreed. "Dat mule is like me—got age on him; but I shore loves dat mule. Me an' him has been wuckin' togedder so long dat I disremember when."

"Tis a pity to part wid him," Skeeter remarked, merely for something to say.

"I wish I could take him wid me," Harney sighed; "but Lawd, a ole nigger an' a ole mule in de Nawth—us would git in de way."

"Little Bit kin ride de mule to town," suggested Skeeter. "I'll sell him an' send you de money."

"I ain't gwine to town right now," said Little Bit. "I aims to stay an' he'p Harney pack up."

"You kin he'p him git ready to travel, den you kin fotch de mule to town an' turn him in de Flournoy pasture," counseled Skeeter. "I'll see you befo' you git off, Harney."

"Yes, suh, I'm comin' to de Henscratch befo' I leaves. Thank 'e fer leavin' de mule wid me a little longer. I shore am attached to dat mule. Us is had good times an' hard times wid each yuther, an' a good mule an' a good nigger don't frequent live in de same place fer a long time, like we is done."

## II

"WHAR do us begin packin' up at?" Little Bit inquired, staring around at the empty cabin. "You ain't gwine tote dese ole cook pots, you won't need dese here ole ragged bedclothes, an' you kin make you a three-leg stool like dis'n when you gits whar you's gwine at."

"I ain't got nothin' but a few clothes," Harney replied. "I don't own nothin' else fitten to tote outen dis swamp."

Thereupon he brought forth a suit of clothes, a shirt and collar and tie, and a pair of shoes—wearing apparel which nobody knew that he had.

"Dese here is my burial clothes," he explained simply. "I been keepin' 'em a long time, to use when I dies. Twon't hurt 'em none to travel in 'em a little while I am livin', an' git 'em sot to my shape."

I'm shawt on a hat. Of co'se, I didn't buy me no coffin hat; but I kin wear dis ole one till I kin do better. Mebbe somebody will gimme a hat. Any size will do. A nigger's head will fit any size hat."

After Harney was dressed for the journey, his old faded suit case still lay in the middle of the cabin floor with nothing in it. All the wearing apparel that he intended to take was now on his back. Harney surveyed the suit case with a perplexed look.

"Whut muss I put in dis here gripsack, Little Bit?" he asked.

"Ef I was travelin', I'd tote grub in it," the boy told him. "It's powerful hard fer a nigger to git somepin to eat when he goes on a long trip, ef he don't take it wid him."

"Dat's a mighty good notion," Harney applauded. "I mighty nigh fergot grub offen my mind. Ef I had, my stomick would 'a' got as empty as my head in about four days."

He cleared off the contents of a little shelf—boxes of "sawdines," jars of dried beef, a few cans of pork and beans—and Little Bit tossed them carelessly into the traveling bag.

"Lay 'em straight!" Old Harney bawled. "You ain't got sense enough to put corn-cobs in a slop bucket!"

Then Harney went to a little closet and brought forth two glass fruit jars. He packed them himself, placing them so that they would not be broken.

"Dese here jars is full of brandied cherries, Little Bit," he said, with a note of sadness in his tone. "De Gaitskills is my white folks, an' ole Mis' Ferginia Gaitskill gimme dem jars of cherries jes' befo' she hauled off an' died. I done kep' 'em a long time."

"Dat's de fust home-brew ever made in dis here country," Little Bit commented.

"Yes, suh, ole mis' made it at home."

"Better gib it to me," Little Bit suggested. "Dis home-brew mought make you homesick."

"Dar ain't no sickness in dem jars," Harney declared, "even ef de ole lady did up an' die about time she made it."

Finally the cabin was closed, and the superannuated mule carried the man, the boy, and the suit case through the swamp and down the highway to Tickfall.

"My train don't leave out till night, Little Bit," the old man said, when they

arrived in town. "You ride de mule on to de pasture. I'll hop off here an' ax my friends good-by."

Harney stopped first at the bank, where he greeted a gray-haired man with patrician manners and eyes twinkling with humor.

"I come to ax you good-by, Marse Tom," he whined.

"That's good news!" Colonel Gaitskill replied.

"I'm gwine up Nawth, whar my little gal lives at," Harney continued.

"I hope your daughter will be glad to see you, and will induce you to remain with her for the rest of your life," said the colonel.

"Yes, suh, dat's it—de rest of my life," Harney assured him. "I ain't never comin' back."

"One by one my colored friends depart, Harney," observed Gaitskill. "Some go to jail, some go to the graveyard, and a few—not as many as I could wish—go up North. I see nothing but a lonesome old age before me; but I don't mind the prospect a bit—not a bit."

"Yes, suh! As fer me, I'm tryin' to git out of dat lonesome ole age an' escape away from de loneliness by livin' wid my gal till she dies," Harney answered.

"May she live forever!" Gaitskill exclaimed fervently.

"I hopes she'll hab somepin fer us to live on," Harney sighed, giving a subtle emphasis to the last word.

"Oh, yes, I understand!" Gaitskill replied promptly. "I had not overlooked that part of it. I give you one dollar to help you on your way. If you want to do something for me in return, wait until next winter and send me a cigar box full of nice cool snow."

The two men rose, as Harney pocketed the dollar with voluble thanks. Gaitskill solemnly held out his hand to bid old Harney farewell. Clutching the brown paw of the old man who had carried the banker on his shoulders when he was a baby, Gaitskill intoned with the utmost solemnity:

"When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain; but we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again!"

"Suh?" Harney asked.

"Yes, suh!" Gaitskill answered with twinkling eyes.

"Huh!" Harney grunted.



There was some mystery here. He decided not to poke at it. It might go off. He walked out.

## III

WITH a knowledge acquired by experience, old Harney went across the street to "pick de cotehouse gang," as he would have expressed it. He found the sheriff sitting idly in his office. Removing his ragged hat, the old negro held it before him in an embarrassed way and entered the room.

"Mawnin', Marse John."

"How much?" Sheriff Flournoy asked, noting the supplicatory position of the ragged hat.

"I'm leavin' town, Marse John," Harney remarked. "Gwine Nawth."

"How much?" Flournoy inquired again, thrusting his hand into his pocket.

"My gal is sick, an' she writ me to come up an' see her befo' she die," Harney continued. "I'm gwine."

"How much?" Flournoy repeated, jingling a bunch of keys in his pocket.

"Well, suh, of co'se, ef you jes' insists, I don't mind tellin' you dat Marse Tom Gaitskill donated me a dollar. It made me feel mighty good," Harney said in a pleading tone.

"Here's the other one," Flournoy promptly replied, tossing a bill on the table.

"Good-by, Marse John," said Harney, as he pocketed the money. "I shore thanks you fer dis loose change!"

"Don't come here again for about two weeks," Flournoy commanded. "I don't want to give all my money away. I don't own a bank, like Colonel Gaitskill."

"I ain't never comin' back, Marse John," Harney said, earnestly.

"Praise the Lord! This is the last pay day!" the sheriff exclaimed.

"I aims to die up Nawth," Harney told him.

"You aims to die, and death loves a shining mark," Flournoy commented. "I hope you both make a hit. Good-by and good luck!"

It was late in the afternoon before Harney completed his round of calls upon his white friends, and all of them gave him something to speed him on his way. With silver jingling in every pocket, he went to the Henscratch, Skeeter Butts's place of

business, to get his suit case and bid farewell to some of his colored friends.

"You done choosed a bad time to go, Harney," Vinegar Atts remarked. "Mustard Prophet is givin' a big party to-night, an' you is been celebrated as our oldest an' most wuthless nigger at dat party fer a long time."

"I won't be dar to-night, an' never no more from dis time on," old Harney replied grouchily. "I done noticed to-day dat nobody, white or black, wus real sorry I wus leavin' out. I never seed de whites donate money so quick an' free an' lib'ral, an' when I told 'em I wusn't comin' back no more, dey looked glad!"

"Dey's glad because you won't be so expenshious to 'em up Nawth," Vinegar explained; "but dey is sad you's gwine."

"Dey didn't ack sad," Harney complained testily.

"Good gawsh!" Pap Curtain snarled. "Whut in de name of mud does you expect us to do under dese here succumstances? I ain't gwine fall on yo' neck an' kiss you good-by, 'tain't no matter how bad you want me to! I ain't gwine do it! I'd ruther kiss a mule!"

"Naw! Me, neither!" Figger Bush quacked. "Of co'se, I mought miss you ef I ever thinks about you, but I won't never hab nothin' to remind my mind dat you ever wus been here or had went. 'Twon't be like it mought be ef you wus dead an' in de graveyard wid a stoomstone at yo' head an' foots."

"You onderstan' dat de Lawd's people ain't gwine miss you in Tickfall," Vinegar Atts remarked. "You withdrawned from de sawsiety of de saints an' cut out de religium services at de church long ago. You ceasted to be even a seat member as fur back as I kin remember, an' you ain't paid nothin' fer de propergation of de Gawspill ever in yo' life; an' now, when you is gwine fer good, you cain't expect me to set down an' bawl like a yearlin' baby an' mourn yo' loss, an' hold a memorial service, an' hab de follerers of de faith sot up a lodge of sorer on you."

"I'll miss you until I sells dat ole mule of yourn," Skeeter Butts told him. "Mebbe I kin find a sucker at de party to-night whut will buy a cheap mule."

"I bet dat mule is de only thing in Tickfall dat will miss me when I'm gone," Harney sighed.

"Naw!" Pap Curtain snapped. "You

don't see de point. You take toothache an' stomick ache, fer ninstance. Dey's pestication, an' when dey's gone, we miss 'em; but we don't mourn deir loss."

"We all wishes you a safe journey, Harney, an' we hopes you will hab a happy home up Nawth. We is glad to hear you say dat you plans to spend all de rest of yo' days up dar," Vinegar Atts said. "Dat is de best we kin do fer you. Later on we might all chip in an' raise a copper cent an' send you a post card."

"Dat's as much as I kin hope fer," Harney said, humbly. "Of co'se, I know I ain't much nigger, but I reckon my gal will be glad to see me. I'm de only daddy she's got, such as I is, an' whut dar is of me. Now I got to ooze along todes de deppo an' buy my ticket. Good-by!"

"Good-by!" the Big Four of Tickfall chorused.

They watched him as he walked down the middle of the dusty road, balancing his suit case on his head, and enveloped in the golden glory of the setting sun. As he started down the slope toward the station, he began to disappear in sections. First, his feet and legs were gone, then his body, then his head. The "fade-out" was the old, battered suit case, sidewise, appearing to be level with the road, as if it lay abandoned in the sun-kissed dust of the broad highway.

#### IV

"I AIN'T et no vittles since mawnin'," Harney remarked to himself, as he passed a lunch stand near the railroad station. "I reckon I had oughter fill up befo' I gits on de train."

He crossed the railroad track and walked up a dusty lane in the woods, stopping beside a spring of water. Opening his suit case, he took out a can of sardines, cut open the top with his big huntsman's knife, and began to eat. He found other things that were equally palatable, and with the improvidence of his race, he ate them, forgetting that this was the food which was to nourish him on his long journey.

Eating from the top toward the bottom of his suit case, he came at length to the two jars of brandied cherries. He unscrewed the tops of each jar, drank the liquor, poured the cherries out in his hand, and ate them from his palm. Pickled as he had been for years in the corn-shuck whisky of the Louisiana swamps, Harney

was not even conscious that the cherry brandy had any alcoholic content. It was merely a sweet liquor to him.

"Dat was a good ole white lady whut gimme dem jars of juice," he remarked to himself. "She bawled me out frequent, an' gimme hot advices about not bein' so wuthless an' no-count; but she didn't mean no harm by dat, an' she always passed out a few vittles befo' I went away."

He tossed the jars aside with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Dat home-brew had oughter been drunk at home, because it wus made at home. Mebbe ef I had tuck it along wid me, it would 'a' made me homesick."

He closed his suit case and rose with the intention of going at once to the station.

"Mussn't fergit to buy my ticket," he remarked. "I reckon it will cost a heap of dollars to git up above de Mason an' Jurisdiction line, but it will be wuth it. Dese here Tickfall niggers looks down on a feller."

He glanced about him, thankful that he had eaten his final meal in Tickfall, amid the familiar sights of the Louisiana jungle, where he had spent all his life. The sunset had been veiled in a mist of purple and gold. He could see the moon now in the evening twilight, dimly shining down the great corridors of the forest trees, like an altar light in a temple of majestic columns. The balmy, spice-laden fragrance of the atmosphere was tangy on his lips with the salt of the Gulf of Mexico.

The vesper hour made him reminiscent.

"I done been kicked out of eve'y bar-room dat ever wus in Tickfall. I am begged somepin to eat at de kitchen door of all de white folks in town. I done j'ined in an' been churchd out of de Shoofly meetin'house four diffunt times in my day. I been cussed by all de white men in Tickfall, an' some niggers. I been blimblamed by all de white womans, an' pesticated by all de cullud ladies whut lives in dese parts fer de past sixty year. I's had dawgs sicked on me, an' one time I wus run by a mad bull, an' two diffunt times I'm been chased by graveyard ha'nts. I'm nine hundred an' ninety-nine year ole, hand runnin', an' done wore out my welcome in Tickfall town."

Suddenly he remembered that he was standing beside the Flournoy pasture, where Skeeter had told Little Bit to park his mule until it could be sold at auction.

"I reckon I had oughter go tell dat mule good-by," he soliloquized; "but he won't never know de diffunce ef I don't. Dat mule ain't got no profound mind. I's too ole to be climbin' fences to pat a mule farewell. Excusin' dat, my ole mule kicked me about fawty year ago, an' I said at dat time dat I wus gwine git rid of him!"

He leaned against the fence, resting his elbows on the top rail, listening to the sounds of the evening. Behind him he heard the unmusical tinkle of a cowbell, at intervals accentuated to a more discordant clamor when the old cow tossed her head to rid herself of tormenting flies. Far over in the woods came the howl of a hound chasing a rabbit. There was nothing for the canine to eat in the cabin of his colored master except "pot licker," and if he craved fresh meat he must run it down and eat it raw. A hoot owl defiantly answered the hopefully mouthing dog. A bird in the thick undergrowth urged the old negro with the persistent monotony of a ticking clock, wearying the ear by his insistency:

"Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!"

Then there came to his ears the sounds of the barnyard—the lowing of cows coming home to be milked, the bawling of their calves, the rattle of milk pails, the slamming of barn doors, and chickens squawking and squalling as they struggled for a place on the roost, lost their perches, and came fluttering wildly to the ground. A long procession of work mules came trailing down the lane through the woods, the gears rattling, and one big black man astride of a big black lead mule mouthing to the world a song about:

"De white man say de times is hawd;  
Nigger don't worry, fer he trusts de Lawd.  
No matter how hawd de times may be,  
Chickens don't roost too high fer me—  
I'm a nachel-bawn reacher!"

A dozen colored men, all astride of mules, answered in a mighty chorus:

"An' dat ain't no lie!"

Encouraged by this encomium, the big black man continued:

"Dar sets de woodpecker, learnin' how to figger,  
All fer de white man, an' nothin' fer de nigger!"

Once more the riders in the rear reproclaimed their high commendation:

"An' dat ain't no lie! Git up here, mule! Haw!"

The line swung to the left, and Harney Shake watched them moving slowly toward the barn. Ten minutes later he heard twenty mules squealing in delight, as they saw the men come from the crib with their food and pour it out in the long feeding troughs.

And then, in answer to their squealing voices, there came from over in the pasture the rising and falling inflections of a mule's bray—a sound which seemed to come from the depths of the animal's heart, and to express the innermost feelings of his better nature in its higher moods.

Harney Shake recognized the voice of that mule. He snatched off his old wool hat, and stood in a reverent attitude, as if listening to a sacred solo from some noted vocalist of the musical world. The old man's chin began to tremble. Tears flowed down his face, and he wiped them on his hat.

The years rolled back like a scroll. He saw himself a young slave in the cotton fields of Tickfall Parish, working in the blazing Southern sun, following a mule's tail up and down the cotton rows. He saw himself a freeman, by what process he did not understand, merely told that the "year of jubilo" had come, and his first great labor was to save money enough to buy a mule.

Mules had come and gone in his career during the sixty years since "freedom," but in all his knowledge of the race, confined to the narrow domains of Tickfall Parish, two things had been inseparable—"de nigger an' de mule." And now he was separating himself from his mule, and was bound for a far country, knowing not what things might befall him there. Resting his arms upon the top rail of the fence, he placed his aged gray head upon them and sobbed aloud.

Over in the pasture, the aged mule brayed again.

Far away, Harney Shake heard dimly the whistle of his train, blowing for the bridge over Dorfoche Bayou. Time to go to the station!

He picked up his suit case and started.

## V

THAT same evening there was a great party in progress at the Nigger-Heel plantation. Mustard Prophet, the overseer, and Hopey, his wife, made it their custom to entertain their friends once a year. The

dinner represented all that was dearest to a negro's heart. There were squirrels and rabbits, baked 'possum and persimmon cider, great sirupy yams and hot biscuits.

The negroes ate with consuming hunger. Their appetites grew with their efforts. None of them were satisfied until everything to eat had disappeared, and every guest at the finish was four inches nearer to the table than when he began by the natural expansion of his corporeal capacity.

Pushing back from the table, the negroes began to sing songs such as only negroes can devise, and only the blacks can sing:

"Alligator sleepin' in a cypress bog—  
Nigger comes a walkin' long through de fog—  
He stump his toe an' fall over a log—  
Oh, whar's dat nigger now?"

A long, musical moan rose from the throats of the men and women, and twenty-five wailing voices asked in a harmonious chorus: "Whar's dat nigger now?"

At that moment, as if in answer to their inquiry, an unexpected guest entered upon the scene of festivity and stood beside the table, awaiting the greetings of his friends. He was not attired for the feast. He did not even have on his coffin clothes.

The trousers he wore were almost as old as the man himself, faded and ragged and covered with swamp mud, torn and patched in a hundred different places. His shirt was of such indescribable raggedness, and so soiled, that a swamp hog would have turned up his nose and retreated from it in disgust. He carried in his hand an old wool hat, the nap worn off, and the fiber turned red from exposure to the sun and rain.

"Howdy, niggers?" Harney Shake greeted them, as they sat in silent astonishment at his unexpected appearance. "Gawd knows, I'm shore glad to git back home!"

"Whar you been at?" Vinegar Atts wanted to know.

"I ain't been nowhar to speak of, excusin' in my mind," Harney said, simply. "My mind called itself makin' a trip up Nawth."

"Ain't yo' gal baby lookin' fer you up Nawth?" Pap Curtain asked, in a deeply disappointed tone.

"Mebbe so," Harney Shake said; "but she jes' wants me. I'm done found out dat I'm needed here."

"Who on Gawd's yearth needs you aroun' dese here parts?" Skeeter Butts wanted to know.

"Brudders," Harney said, "I will tell you exackly jes' whut happened, an' you will see how I couldn't go."

"Tell us simple an' slow," Vinegar urged. "It's gwine be hard fer us to onderstan' how come you ain't went."

"Well, suh, I moseyed aroun' an' axed my white folks good-by, an' I knowed by de way dey talked back dat dey ain't need me here an' dey warn't gwine miss me," Harney Shake began.

"Dat's right," Vinegar agreed.

"Den I oozed about an' axed my cullud nigger friends good-by, an' dey showed plain dat dey didn't need me an' warn't gwine miss me," Harney continued.

"Dat's right," Vinegar assured him.

"Atter dat, I went down to de deppo an' crossed de railroad track, an' leaned agin de Flournoy pasture fence, whar Skeeter had put my mule at; an' dat mule spoke to me," Harney told them.

"Do tell!" Vinegar Atts exclaimed.

"Yes, suh, I never heard no white man talk as plain as dat ole mule. His message touched my heart, an' I leant on de fence an' cried.

"'Mule,' I said to myself, 'don't say no more. I ain't gwine to leave you!'"

"Fer de Lawd's sake, whut did dat mule say to you?" Vinegar Atts howled.

The crowd leaned forward breathlessly to hear the message of the beast of burden. The old man laid his hat upon the table, belled both hands around his mouth, and, in perfect imitation of a mule's bray, he pronounced the speech which the equine companion of his lonely years had delivered:

"Har-nee! Har-nee-ee! Ha-a-r-nee-ee! Shake!"

#### NIGHT ON THE IRISH SEA

A QUIET sea . . . a star-strewn sky . . .  
Somewhere a sea gull's strange wild cry . . .  
A shadowy headland . . . and afar  
The beauty of a lighthouse star!

Lena Whittaker Blakeney



# "Good Men and Bad"

THE STORY OF A UNITED STATES MARSHAL WHO BELIEVED  
THAT EVEN AN OUTLAW WITH A PRICE ON HIS  
HEAD DESERVED A SQUARE DEAL

By Harry Sinclair Drago

THE string of horses standing outside the local jail in Cimarron City betokened nothing unusual. It was only a little after nine o'clock in the evening—not at all a late hour for such a town.

Lights shone brightly from most of the business places. The street, however, was strangely deserted, and it was impossible to escape the feeling of impending drama.

Rawhide Bill Wightman, United States marshal for the Northern Oklahoma district, sensed it as he let his weary horse walk up to the water trough outside the jail. Through an open window the low murmur of voices reached him.

His arrival passed unnoticed, and he rolled inside with his peculiar swinging gait as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to be dropping in on Milt Hanna, the town marshal, at this time.

Hanna was big and fat, and he sprawled, rather than sat, in his rickety swivel chair, with his feet cocked on his desk, his eyes half closed. His attitude, and that of his four deputies, said plainly enough that all were only killing time.

Hanna brought his legs down noisily from their perch as he caught his first glimpse of Marshal Bill, and the flash of hatred that crossed his face did not go unmarked by his visitor.

The others turned, then, and recognized the newcomer, too. An ominous silence settled heavily on the dusty room as Marshal Bill sank into the chair at Hanna's side.

"Be comfortable!" he said, laughingly, pretending not to see the hostile glances leveled at him as he fanned himself with his Stetson. Out of the tail of his eye he

saw five Winchesters stacked in the corner. No one deigned to speak to him for the moment.

Hanna cleared his throat, and in the charged stillness the sound rumbled menacingly. "What's on your mind?" he demanded sullenly.

"Nothing—nothing," Bill drawled slowly, ignoring Hanna's insolent tone. "Just dropped in for a little talk."

"Talk? What in hell you got to talk to me about?"

Such belligerency made old Rawhide smile grimly. Hanna had long been a thorn in his flesh, and he did not come expecting to be welcomed. That his presence in Cimarron should prove so exasperating as to call forth hostility of this sort confirmed the message that had brought Marshal Bill down from Guthrie with his horse in a lather.

"Dolan," he answered briefly.

"Oh—oh, Dolan, eh?" Hanna stammered over this.

Marshal Bill had got to the point a little quicker than Milt had calculated he would. Hanna's men were a bit disconcerted by this directness, too, and they exchanged glances with grotesque furtiveness.

On Monday night of that week, Red "Buck" Dolan, and those who always rode with him, Bent Foster, Slim Pardee, "Pin" Quick, and Muskogee Joe, among others, had swooped down out of the Oklahoma Panhandle and held up and robbed a Santa Fe express train just south of the little village of Orlando.

Word of what was happening had reached Marshal Bill, but it came almost too late. Dolan and his men were leaving the scene of action when the marshal and his deputies arrived.

A running fight had followed. Musko-gee Joe had been killed. The outlaws had headed for the Cimarron River, crossing it before dawn, and breaking the telltale trail they had left behind them.

Every ranch and dugout housed potential friends of the Dolan gang, for Dolan, like the Jennings boys, and the Daltons, preyed only on the rich, and as a consequence always had an ace in the hole.

"You—you haven't heard anything, have you?" old Rawhide pursued.

Hanna considered a long moment before replying.

"I ain't!" he thundered contemptuously; then: "Why ain't I? They ain't ten miles from here. They been below the river all the time."

An idea flashed on Milt, and he voiced it. "If you'd come to me without tryin' to play a lone hand, I might of told you somethin'. It—it may not be too late even now. You'd have to cross the river here and swing back to the north. I reckon you could find the place."

Marshal Bill shook his head slowly, his eyes holding Hanna's. The latter's expression changed. He seemed to admit the futility of pursuing the subject further.

"I guess you misunderstood me, Milt," Bill said. "I meant—have you heard anything *new*. I know Dolan is below the river. No use smoking a man out when he's coming out of his own accord. If I fell for what you're suggesting, I'd just about shoo him right into your hands."

"Well, what if you did? You've always been hollerin' about coöperation!"

Marshal Bill smiled patiently.

"Not this time, Milt. The thing for us to do is put our cards on the table. I know the Dolan boys are coming through to-night. I was just wondering if you knew what time."

"So that's what your man Higbee was doin' down here to-day, eh? Nosit' around!" Hanna banged his fist on his desk.

"Say," he roared, facing his men, "which one of you is double crossin' me? I should have known somebody had talked when you told me Higbee had turned his horse and was fannin' it back to Guthrie. The only ones who knew is right in this room now. Come on, who was it? Who is doin' the talkin'?"

The four men protested their innocence.

"The bird who tipped you off isn't

here," Marshal Bill said pointedly. "Maybe it was him. A double crosser doesn't play square with one man and crooked with the next; he's crooked all the time."

Hanna whirled on him with an ugly leer. "What do you know about who tipped me off?" he demanded.

"Enough," old Rawhide drawled, provokingly, smilingly.

"Well, if you're not bluffin', give him a name."

Marshal Bill was bluffing. But no one could bluff more magnificently; and in the present instance, although he could do no better than fall back on his deputy's guess—and it was a guess, however shrewd—he smiled confidently and crossed his legs more comfortably.

"You know, Milt," he said, craftily, "if a man's got something for sale, he usually looks around to learn what the current prices are. Now, if a skunk like Tony Leflett, who used to ride with Dolan, came to me with information to sell, I'd figure him to do a little shopping before he sold—and if I closed with him, to do a little talking afterwards."

## II

THE shot reached the mark. Hanna cursed violently, and his men were not less enraged. They looked anxiously to their leader.

Milt threw up his hands in disgust. "Enough of this beatin' round the bush; let's get to the point. What do you want?"

"I want a square deal, Milt. Not for myself, but for Dolan."

"What do you mean, a square deal?" Hanna thundered.

Marshal Bill had the reputation of never getting excited, and he lived up to it now.

"Well, since you pretend not to know, Milt, I'll tell you," he replied softly. "I don't know how many men Dolan had with him—some may have got away—but Red and Slim Pardee, and Quick and that half-breed, Legrande, are holed up just below the river. Somebody's been hiding 'em. Maybe you can guess who. They're all bad hurt; Red worst of all. Some time to-night they're planning to slip through here in a light wagon—buried under a load of hay."

Marshal Bill pulled his white mustache as he paused and studied the ring of faces around him, seeking some unconscious sign of admission. He had not far to look.

"But this is all old stuff, Milt," he protested. "You and your boys don't have to look so dumb. I know you're planning to ambush that wagon to-night. You're going to riddle it. There won't be any talk of surrendering or capturing them. They're worth as much dead as alive, when it comes to the reward money, and that seems to be all you're interested in."

"Suppose it is?" Hanna demanded flatly, his eyes twin points of fire. "What are you goin' to do about it?"

"I'll do something, Milt," Marshal Bill replied. "You know, you've always been a thorn in my flesh. That's your privilege; I'm not complaining about that. But, in the twenty-eight years I have been enforcing the law, in one capacity or another, I never heard of anything so rotten as this. And yet people wonder why we have outlaws! Good men and bad appreciate a square deal; nine times out of ten when a man turns outlaw it's because he didn't get one."

For the first time since he had known him, Hanna now saw old Rawhide excited. Ignoring all of them, Wightman paced the floor nervously, his pink cheeks puffed out and his heavy eyebrows and mustache standing erect. He was the kindest of men, but his appearance now belied the fact.

"I suspect I killed Muskogee Joe the other night," he went on. "I'd have got Dolan and the rest, if I could. Lord knows, I tried. But I draw the line at potting a man in the back, or shooting him down like a dog, when he's helpless. Dolan dead can't talk, and there are people who'd like to see his mouth shut forever. Maybe the bird that tipped you off made that part of the split that he's to get."

"Don't go too far," Hanna warned.

"I can't. This is murder, nothing else. I'll guarantee to take 'em, single-handed; or I'll help you to take 'em. But, by God, I won't let you shoot 'em down like a pack of rats."

Hanna's mouth drew out into a thin line, and his beefy jaw protruded until he looked not unlike an undershot bull terrier.

"You're out of order, now, Wightman," he said with terrible emphasis. "You ain't comin' down here and tellin' me what I'm goin' to do or not do. I advise you to keep your hand out of this affair. For all your talk, I dug up this tip off. You had your chance, and never so much as got a smell. It's my turn now. This reward

money ain't goin' to be split with no outsider."

"You talk like a boy, Milt," Marshal Bill said, wearily. "I couldn't take a cent of that money, even if I wanted to—which I don't. If those boys are wounded it isn't right to bushwack 'em without even trying to get 'em alive. That's all that I'm interested in."

Curly Montrose, one of Hanna's deputies, snickered and said: "It's pretty rich when a U. S. marshal gits to runnin' around lookin' out for outlaws. No wonder Dolan never gits caught. I call that good."

Old Rawhide smiled feebly. "That's pretty strong talk, but I'm not going to eat crow on it. My record speaks for itself. I've been around here a long time—so long that I can remember when a man was either a deputy or a horse thief; he wasn't both."

Montrose had been convicted twice of stealing horses.

"We won't get personal!" Hanna exclaimed, pushing Curly back in his chair.

"Oh, but we will! We're going to get awful personal from now on, Milt," Marshal Bill muttered. "If you shoot those boys down, folks are going to say you were afraid to take 'em alive. Have you thought of that?"

"Let 'em think what they please," Hanna retorted. "What they think wouldn't help us any if we happened to get bumped off. The way I look at it, Dolan and his bunch are worth just as much dead as alive. Ain't a one of 'em but has sworn he'll never be taken as long as he can crook a finger around a trigger. And they ain't got anythin' to lose, playin' it thataway. They know what's ahead of 'em if they're ever captured. We'll wipe 'em out; and that 'll be the end of it—and no more'n they deserve."

Marshal Bill shook his head sternly. "I can't agree with you, Milt," he said. "Don't think I'm getting sentimental about outlaws in my old age; I'm not. But I can appreciate squareness even in a bandit; and Dolan did the square thing by me once. I told Cash Haffley—he was with me, and knows it's true—that I'd never mention it to a soul; and I'm going to tell you now only because I've got to."

"It was last January. Cash and I set out by ourselves for the old Arapahoe Agency. I knew there was a rancher over there who was in touch with the Dolan

gang right along. His name's Catlett; you may have heard of him. From what we had dug up it looked as if he was their line of communication, tipping them off to how the land lay and what was doing in Guthrie.

"I had Catlett pretty well tied up with the theft of a bunch of steers. I figured maybe I could squeeze him and get something out of him about the gang. If I got the information, I intended organizing a posse and combing the Strip and No Man's Land until we turned them out.

"We had a light covered wagon and food enough to last us a month. Cash took his old dog along. A lot of that country was new to us. Kept snowing all the time—a real blizzard part of the way—and we didn't get along very fast. Pretty cold going, too; but you know what that country is when the wind's blowing. By asking questions of every man we met, we managed to find Catlett's place on the afternoon of the fifth day out. It was just a big dugout.

"There wasn't a sign of a living thing; no horses or cattle. Smoke was curling from the chimney, though; and it looked mighty good to us. Right there we decided Catlett was going to have company over night. I got down and left Cash sitting in the wagon, together with my Winchester. I pushed open the door and stepped inside."

### III

OLD Rawhide stroked his grizzled chin as he paused and studied Hanna.

"Say, Milt," he went on, after a few moments, "I'll never forget that second if I live to be a million. A man that I knew must be Catlett sat before a roaring fire of blackjack logs at the farther end of the room. It was a long room, and both sides of it was built up with bunks enough to sleep twenty men. The bunks had curtains on them, and you couldn't tell whether they was occupied or not. I reckon you know what I'd found, don't you?"

Hanna nodded grimly, and his men joined him in the gesture.

"The gang's hide-out!" some one gasped.

"You guessed it! It got to me pretty quick, I'm telling you. No wonder we hadn't been able to locate the Dolan gang out in No Man's Land. Like as not they hadn't been that far west in months. Their

hang-out was right there, and I'd stumbled into it as innocent as a kitten!"

"What 'd you do?" Ted Ames, Hanna's kid deputy, prompted as Bill hesitated.

"There was nothing for me to do but go in. I went up to the fire."

"What do you want?" Catlett growled. I had to make talk in a hurry. Cash's dog was barking like mad to get out of the wagon. That gave me an idea. 'We're looking for Bill Yoakum's place,' I said, recalling the name of a man we had met up with that morning. 'The man I mean owns a fighting dog that's been winning all the money in sight. We aim to take some of it away from him. That toothless dog in the wagon couldn't have licked a rabbit, but he had a mean bark, and for a second I thought my bluff would work.'

"But Catlett just shook his head. I was chilled through, and from force of habit I turned my back to the fire—you know how a man 'll do that. When I looked up, the sight that met my eyes froze my blood. From every bunk the muzzle of a gun had been shoved out. I don't suppose there was a man in that room but had recognized me the minute I opened the door."

Hanna's men muttered to themselves, but Milt did not say a word.

"You talk about getting busted!" Marshal Bill exclaimed. "Well, *that* was being up against it! I thanked God I wasn't armed. It was my only chance that I'd get out alive. There wasn't any sound but the howling of the wind piling up the drifts, deeper and deeper.

"So you don't know Yoakum?" I asked, just to say something, and trying not to see those guns.

"Catlett shook his head again.

"Well, how do you get out of here?" I inquired then.

"The same damn way you got in! he roared, jumping to his feet.

"I started for the door, never expecting to reach it, I'm telling you. Those muzzles were so close I could have put out my hand and touched them. Well, I made the door, all right. I was just opening it when Slim Pardee leaped out of his bunk and raised his rifle to bust me. Before he could pull the trigger, a hand shot out of the curtains beside him and knocked his gun down.

"Let me alone," Slim yelled, as I turned.

"Nothin' doin'," the other man an-



swered, and out stepped Red 'Buck' Dolan himself. 'Keep on goin', marshal,' he drawled, 'and don't turn back.'

Wightman paused.

"My God!" young Ames exclaimed, and the silence that followed was broken only by Milt Hanna's skeptical grunt.

"I climbed into the wagon," Bill went on, "but we could hear the wrangling going on inside the dugout. 'I left him for you,' Slim cried, 'and now you let him get away!'"

"Well, Red paid me the sincerest compliment I've ever received. 'Bill Wightman's too good a man to be shot in the back,' he said.

"We drove off. I came back the next morning with a posse, but the gang was gone."

Marshal Bill's voice shook as he dropped his head. "I reckon you understand now why I can't let you murder him, Milt," he said.

Marshal Bill had carefully calculated the effect of what he was saying as he continued; and Hanna had, too—not on himself, but his men. Both knew that there was wavering in the ranks. As for Hanna, old Rawhide had to look no further than the man's eyes, into which there had slowly crept the steely glitter of the killer, for his answer.

"Say, that's the second time you've thrown that word murder at me," he muttered, defiantly, intent on stemming any defection among his men. "I've listened to you, but I don't intend to be abused. Suppose you just forget that brand of talk."

"But there isn't any other name for it, Milt," Marshal Bill replied, without hesitation. "Come on, now, be a man! Let me go along with you, and we'll see this thing out together."

Hanna laughed evilly. "Not a chance," he said flatly. "I ain't goin' to let you spoil this party. You might not be sorry a second time to see Dolan get away. I'm not sayin' Dolan didn't do you a favor; maybe he did. That don't mean anythin' to me. I was gettin' prepared to hear you say he'd reformed—that seems to be your long suit, reformin' outlaws.

"There was Henry Marr; you got him a pardon, didn't you? He was goin' to go straight. What 'd he do three months after he was out?—blew two banks in one day, and shot a man down in cold blood, an innocent man!"

Milt Hanna turned to his men for corroboration. "You remember that, don't you, boys? Sure!" he exclaimed, as they nodded. "That's what comes from being soft with men outside the law. Even you can't deny it, Wightman."

"I'd be the last one in the world even to try to deny it. It wasn't Marr that threw me down; it was whisky. Henry Marr, sober, would have kept his word with me."

"My God, you'll be an evangelist yet," Hanna snickered.

"Well, take it from me, Milt, that ought to be a big part of every peace officer's duty. Just because Marr slipped back, I'm not willing to admit my system's wrong; there are too many men living straight to-day around here that would be in prison if I'd played it your way. A marshal ought to be interested in something else than just killing men and grabbing reward money."

"Maybe so—maybe so," Hanna remarked lightly as he snapped his watch shut. "You play it your way and I'll play it mine."

"That's final, eh, Milt?"

"You got me correct. It's gettin' late; we'll have to be movin'."

Marshal Bill nodded resignedly. "All right," he said slowly, "have it your way." He sighed to himself and got to his feet. "Might as well run along," he went on; "no use my staying here."

Hanna stretched himself lazily as Marshal Bill started for the door. "I'd keep right on goin' when I got out of town, if I was you," he called out with an insinuation that was a threat.

#### IV

MARSHAL BILL whirled on him at that. His big Colts seemed fairly to jump into his hands.

"Put 'em up!" he snapped. "Come on, climb!" he prompted, as Hanna and the others hesitated in their blank surprise. "You boys aren't going to meet any prominent people to-night. Line up against the wall—and keep 'em up!"

"Say, what the hell is this?" Hanna bellowed.

"No gab," Marshal Bill warned. "I'm all talked out."

He disarmed them, and went through Hanna's clothes for the cell keys.

"Come on, march," he ordered. "You

boys are going to sample your own jail for once."

Hanna's deputies offered no resistance as he put them in separate cells. Milt, however, objected strenuously.

"Now that's just about enough noise out of you, Milt," Bill purred velvetly. "I'm not hankering to have a mob running down here to see what this is all about. I'm in the mood to bust you if you let out another yell like that."

And surely he meant what he said. When he had turned the key on Hanna, he went round the room closing the windows. He stopped to mop his face after he had found the key to the heavy steel door which barred the way to the front room.

"I'll just lock this for luck," he said, aloud. "Well, so long, boys," he called out then as he closed the door.

"You'll pay for this," Hanna shouted; "see if you don't! We won't be here long."

"Well, maybe so, Milt. You may be a prophet, but my guess is you're just a yellow skunk."

Hanna retorted hotly, but the door clanged noisily, and Marshal Bill did not hear.

A half hour after he left Cimarron City, Marshal Bill rejoined his two deputies, Cash Haffley and Homer Higbee, where he had left them in the shadows of the little bridge at Tillotson's ranch. A little creek, dry in summer, was the reason for the bridge. A few walnuts and a gum tree or two grew along the creek bottom.

Marshal Bill had left his men there to keep Hanna from using the place for his ambushade. It was a likely spot. If Dolan was heading for his old hiding place he would have to pass there.

"Anything doing yet?" he demanded, as he got out of his saddle.

"Not unless you call the chatterin' and buzzin' of all the gnats and jiggers, and God knows what, somethin'," said Haffley.

"There were a few jiggers buzzing down in Cimarron, too," Marshal Bill declared, and then related what had happened. "It was a pretty busy evening, one way and another," he smiled.

"Of course they'll get out," Higbee said. "Some one will hear their yelling."

"No doubt of that," Marshal Bill agreed. "There wasn't anything else to do, though."

"Sure wasn't," they echoed.

The marshal glanced at his watch.

"What time is it?" Homer asked.

"Half past ten," Bill answered, scrutinizing the road. "It's getting late. They ought to be showing up."

Haffley thought he detected a note of indecision in old Rawhide's tone. "You don't think we're playin' a dead hand, eh?" Cash queried. "This isn't the only road they could use."

"No, it isn't. If they crossed the river far enough east, they could use that road by the old Spanish ranch. It would take them clear to Guthrie."

"Yes, but if they cross near town they'll have to pass here," Higbee argued.

"They'll do what you don't expect them to do, and who'd expect them to come right through town?"

"Homer's right," Haffley declared.

"I think so, too," Marshal Bill said.

"It would be a nery thing to do. Then, again, a man isn't so apt to take chances like that when he's shot up. If they weren't wounded I'd be sure we were playing right. Anyhow, we'll wait. If they don't show up by eleven I'll leave the two of you here and try the other road alone."

"I only hope Hanna don't get out to complicate matters," Higbee muttered.

"That's it," Bill replied. "If we don't grab Red and the rest before daylight, I'm going to be in an awful fix."

The night was warm and close, without a breath of wind. The white road stretched away for upward of a mile in the brilliant moonlight. Once, something crossed the road near by, and all were instantly alert.

"Just a prairie wolf," Marshal Bill murmured. The strain of waiting was telling on him as well as the others. He knew Hanna would swear out a warrant for his arrest at the earliest possible moment, and very likely his resignation would be demanded by Washington before the affair was aired in court.

He did not try to minimize the effect of all this on him. It would be a staggering blow—he had been a marshal so long. The salary was insignificant. It wasn't that. Pride and honor were involved. And yet he could not see how he could have done differently.

The minutes dragged out interminably. Nothing happened; no one passed. From afar off came the hooting of an owl—shivery and chilling. No one spoke—although there was no pressing need of silence.

Haffley sat beside Marshal Bill. He wiped his forehead with his arm. It was wet with perspiration. "Nerves," he whispered. Wightman nodded. After that he caught the man glancing toward Cimarron a half dozen times, as though inviting Hanna to appear, preferring even that to the agony of waiting.

Higbee accidentally dislodged a stone. It bounded away to the dry bed of the creek, rudely breaking the strained stillness. All were on their feet at once, guns raised. They smiled sheepishly at one another as they realized the cause of the disturbance.

And it was strange, too, this nervousness, for all were seasoned men, veterans of a score of gun fights and man hunts. Marshal Bill tried to explain this to himself, but he got nowhere. He arose at last and drew out his watch. He breathed so heavily as he noted the time that Higbee, across the bridge, heard him and whirled his head around sharply.

"Five minutes past eleven," Bill muttered. "Fifty-five minutes to midnight! I wonder if we're going to lose 'em after all."

No one attempted to speak. For some reason they did not seem to be able to throw off the tension that held them. Marshal Bill looked from one to the other, communing with himself as he did so.

"Well," he said finally, "I'm going to leave you boys. I don't mind telling you it looks bad. If they've taken the Spanish ranch road they're not far from Guthrie right now."

He caught his horse and vaulted lightly into the saddle for a man of his weight. Without another word he rode off, and his men nodded gloomily as they watched him force his horse into a driving gallop.

# V

It was a slashing ride, such as Marshal Bill has been famous for as a younger man. He was familiar with the country, and, as he rode, he had no difficulty in discovering landmarks by which to gauge his progress. It was mostly a treeless prairie, without cover of any sort. He had no cause to be concerned over this, for, if the open country left him an easy target, it also insured him against running into danger.

The road he was heading for and the main road to Guthrie were converging all the time. In a shallow draw he found a

cattle trail that led to the east. By taking this trail he knew he would cut across the other road eight miles south of the spot where the roads finally merged together.

Even so, it was twelve forty to the minute when he pulled up his foaming horse and got down on his hands and knees to read the story the other road had to tell. And there *was* a story there—wagon tracks and the hoofprints of a team of horses!

Marshal Bill groaned unconsciously as he let the dust trickle through his fingers, testing how solidly packed it was so that he might estimate how much too late he had arrived. He did not light a match to see the better; it was not necessary.

The ribbonlike tracks were deep and black in the moonlight. When first made, their edges had been sharp. They were rounded, now. Wind will do that; but there was no wind to-night, and Marshal Bill knew it was only the dust itself, slipping and settling down into the ruts, that was at work. So, obviously, the tracks were old—two, possibly three, hours had passed since they had been made.

It needed only a glance to tell him the speed at which the team had been traveling—an easy trot! If the wagon held the Dolan gang, they were well on their way to safety. Wightman had no reason to doubt that it was them, for this old road was but little used until the steer shipping began, what travel there was over it being mostly by saddle and by the heavy wagons of freighting outfits. These tracks had been made by a light wagon—the very thing he had expected to find.

"It 'll bring them to Guthrie just before dawn," he muttered. "They'll be hard to find after that."

Although time was precious, he spent the next ten minutes examining the road. In several places the not particularly fresh tracks of rabbits and gophers lay upon the trail the wagon had left—further proof of the time of its passing.

Wightman knew there was nothing for him to do but follow that trail in the dust. It might lead him nowhere; he might be too late. But how much better than to stay there holding an empty bag!

He frowned as he walked to his horse. A fresh animal would have taken him to Guthrie in three hours. He could not expect this tired horse to do better than make it by dawn. However, he had no choice, and, after rubbing down the animal's legs

with a pad of grass, he climbed into his saddle and sent the horse away at an easy hand canter, which he gradually increased as his mount began to perspire again.

When the road he was traveling joined the main road to Guthrie, he got down and studied the tracks.

"Kept on going, all right," he mused. "I've gained a little on them, though."

After breathing his horse he was off again. About half past three he caught sight of a horseman approaching. In a few minutes they met. The man was Brent Taylor, of the Double D outfit, and well known to Marshal Bill.

"Hello, Brent!" he exclaimed. "Where you coming from?"

"Guthrie," Brent answered.

"Did you pass any one on the road?"

Brent had to stop and think. "Why, yes," he drawled, "a wagon, 'bout eight miles out of town, I reckon." He began to sense that something was amiss. "Trail-in' some one?" he questioned.

"No, I'm just out taking the air, Brent," Marshal Bill replied. His manner suddenly became stern. "You didn't happen to see what was in that wagon, eh?"

"No, I didn't. I was half asleep. I said howdy, and he did the same; that was all. Looked to me as though he had a load of hay."

"Right you are!" Bill snapped. "Come on, Brent, get off that horse; I want to borrow it. Turn around and follow me in. I'll see you in Guthrie in the morning."

"Well, now—" Brent started to protest.

"No 'well' about it. Come on; every minute counts."

And before Brent was really awake to what was happening, Marshal Bill was riding away on his horse.

"I hope he throws you, you old hoss thief!" Brent shouted after him. Bill waved his hand and was gone.

The animal he was riding was a rangy dappled gray gelding, fresh and strong. Marshal Bill did not have to crowd him. According to his calculations, the wagon must be within a mile or two of Guthrie right now. At his present speed he should reach town not more than half an hour behind it. He would organize a posse at once.

## VI

His thoughts began to beat in time with the tattoo of flying hoofs. He was living

again—but a chilling thought intruded soon. What if this wagon was only a decoy, and Dolan was sneaking west far to the south?

He shook himself to throw off the thought, but it clung on tenaciously, and not until he caught his first glimpse of Guthrie was he able to put it out of his mind. It was breaking dawn. A little breeze had sprung up.

He cocked his ears once, certain that the wind had brought to him the sound of distant shooting. He did not hear it again. It made him more alert than ever, however, and a gasp of surprise was wrung from him as he came in sight of his house and saw a crowd gathered in front of it.

Not less than twenty men were there, and, as he came nearer, he saw that they were milling around a wagon—a wagon loaded with hay!

Sam Terhune, chief of the Guthrie police, was among them. He recognized others in the crowd—all local men—and, as he reined up his horse and slipped to the ground, he identified the man sitting on the seat of the wagon. It was Red "Buck" Dolan, a rifle in his hands.

Paralysis of a sort seized Marshal Bill.

"Crawl out of there!" Terhune was shouting. "I ain't a goin' to tell yuh again."

"If you want us, come and take us," Dolan flung back. "We ain't surrendering to nobody but Wightman. We know he'll treat us square."

Marshal Bill swallowed hard. "You—you looking for me, Red?" he asked, elbowing his way through the crowd.

Dolan looked up. "Is that you, marshal?" he asked hopefully.

"It's me, Red," old Rawhide replied a little shakily.

"Well, here we are. We been waiting half an hour for you. We were standin' here about fifteen minutes when Terhune spotted us. Put him wise to himself, marshal; he thinks he's caught somebody. And get a doctor; we need him bad—"

The outlaw's voice broke, and he let his rifle slide to the ground.

From under the hay they took the others and carried them inside and placed them on the floor in blankets. Doc Hawkins came and stayed for several hours. In the meantime, Guthrie buzzed. The crowd had been dispersed, and the little white house turned into a hospital.



Marshal Bill was happy. His system had been vindicated. The doctor said all would live. After breakfast Marshal Bill came in and sat down beside Dolan.

"You know you almost fooled me, Red," he said. "I thought you were coming through Cimarron."

"Yeh?" Dolan smiled shrewdly. "Leflett must have talked. I thought he would; that's why we came the other way. Went to Hanna with his news, I suppose."

Marshal Bill enlightened him. When he had finished, Red was silent for a time.

"Don't worry about Hanna," he said. "He won't make any trouble as long as I can talk. He had something more than

the reward money on his mind in wantin' me out of the way. It used to be pretty easy pickin' for us in Cimarron. Maybe there was a reason. Think it over."

"It's no more than I suspected," old Rawhide nodded, as he started to get up.

Dolan held him back with a look. He wanted to thank Marshal Bill, but did not know how to put it in words.

"I'm—I'm mighty glad I didn't let Slim bump you off that time at the agency," he drawled miserably at last. "I'm mighty much obliged to you for what you did last night. You're—you're the only officer that was ever interested in me for anythin' aside from wantin' the glory of killin' me."

# MEAD

SHEEP graze up the mountainside  
Toward the melting snow,  
Trampling wild strawberries down—  
Let the truants go!  
I am busy making mead!  
I've no time to pay them heed!

There's a lad who sought my love  
When he went to trade  
Into strange and distant lands,  
But I was afraid!  
Then I wouldn't tell him *yea*—  
I will tell him so to-day.

I will greet him gracefully.  
I will smile and bow.  
He has never kissed me once—  
He will kiss me now:  
All the women of my clan  
Offer mead to answer man.

Faintly rushing, blowing sounds  
Tremble in the air.  
I will gather bluebell sprays  
For my tumbled hair.  
Beaded wine and honey-sweet,  
Will he want me when we meet?

For I wonder as he comes  
What he left behind?  
(If it were a laughing glance,  
That I wouldn't mind!)  
Though he comes again to me,  
Is his heart my own and free?

If his darkened eyes are soft,  
If he takes the mead,  
He is mine and I am his,  
Willingly indeed!  
(With a word he stilled my woe!  
*Foolish women—doubting so!*)

Sonia Ruthèle Novák

# The Tree of Hate

REVENGE IS SWEET, BUT DON RAMON CASTRO FOUND HIMSELF  
IN A QUANDARY WHEN FATE GAVE HIM A CHANCE TO  
CARRY OUT HIS VOW TO HANG THE ENEMY WHO  
HAD JAILED AND TORTURED HIS FATHER

By Mary Imlay Taylor

"WHEN the fish were not there, my *señor*, the rats were," said Diego, cheerfully. "The cage hung so high above the floor of the cell"—Diego held his hand low over the strawberry cacti on the hillside—"and when the tide rose, Don Mariano's feet were in water. *Madre de Dios*, have I not seen it?"

Don Ramon, stretched at full length at the top of the bluff, stopped in the act of rolling a cigarette, and his gray eyes narrowed as they looked out over the valley below them. There were no shadows, for it was noonday, and things stood up shadowless under the torrid sun. It was a green place, pierced by the narrow thread of a mountain stream, and girt with hills that were blue against a copperish sky. Tall nopal cacti hid the winding ribbon of road by which the horsemen had come.

"Father never told me how bad it was," Don Ramon said musingly. "Rats, you say?"

His jaw set hard. He knew what a dungeon meant in San Juan de Ulua, but for some reason he had never, until that moment, thought of his father in a cell infested with vermin—his father, General Mariano Castro, whose grandfather had been a grandee of old Spain. Poor and out at elbows the Castros had been often, but always wrapped in the mantle of their Spanish pride, scornful, even of kings.

"There were little fish in the water when the tide came in," Diego elaborated. "They nibbled at the bread crumbs the rats left. It was a loaf of bad bread—all mildew—that I slit with a knife to put in the letter for Don Mariano. I put it inside the loaf and pressed the edges tight to hide it.

That was after Don Pedro was beaten and General Flores came down to Vera Cruz. Before that, José, the jailer, was afraid. He would take a bribe, and swear by the mass to leave the keys with me, and then he would lie about it. May the sharks get fat on him!"

Don Ramon lit his cigarette. He had heard old Diego's version of his father's escape from San Juan de Ulua a thousand times. Diego had served the Castros for forty years, and had earned a right to tell of his share in the great exploit; but these details, these revolting details of the cage and the rats and the fish!

Don Ramon bit at the end of his cigarette. His father had never told him all. He remembered now how he had exclaimed at the sight of the old general's worn, white face, and how Don Mariano had laughed at him.

"Like Prosper Mérimée, I've always been the color of the pale horse in the Apocalypse, my son," the elder Castro had said, jokingly.

No wonder he was white, after eight months in an iron cage, with the tide washing his feet and the rats gnawing at his clothes! And his torturer, Don Pedro Alvarado, was still alive, still at large, more shame to Don Mariano's only son!

As if he had read the young man's thoughts, old Diego chuckled gruesomely.

"When we catch Don Pedro, we'll hang him on that dead tree, where he played at hanging Don Mariano, eh, my *señor*?"

Don Ramon nodded grimly. Involuntarily his glance turned to the men of his command. They were squatted on the ground at the edge of the chaparral, eating.

While ago they had been rebels; now a part of the political wheel, one revolution more, and they were Federals—a motley group, ragged and dirty, old *rurales* and new volunteers, peons, all of them, and good fighters, but not too dainty in their methods. Don Ramon had to keep a tight hand on them. He was young, but the habit of command was in his blood, and they obeyed him without question.

As he ran his practiced eye over them, he regretted their ragged uniforms and the shortage of ammunition. Horses were good and plentiful, and he could commandeer more if he needed them. He had just heard that his father's command was to the north of his position, and had been ordered to join it.

He had only halted his men for the noon-day meal. The sun was beating down fiercely on the valley below them, but up here the wind was tempered by the cool of the sierras. They had found a spring, and watered their horses. Diego, the old servant, and faithful follower, lay near his young master, still talking occasionally, but silent now while he filled his pipe.

"There's a camp over there, *señor*," he said finally, pointing with the end of his pipe.

"Where?" inquired Don Ramon, raising his field glasses involuntarily.

The old man pointed eagerly.

"Yonder—see that blue smoke?"

"It's only a whiff—most likely one camp fire."

"No camp there yesterday, *señor*," insisted Diego.

That was true. Ramon remembered it, and looked curiously at the tiny spiral of smoke, which hung over the nopal cacti on the farthest hillside, like a black noisome toadstool.

It was very still. There was not even a murmur of talk from the men, who were lying on their backs, smoking or napping. Now and then a horse stamped. Old Diego, squatted on his heels, shielded his eyes with his hands.

"It's a signal, *señor*!"

"Hark!" Don Ramon rose to his elbow and stared down into the valley. "I hear shots," he said.

Diego nodded. His nostrils seemed to quiver and expand like those of an old war horse scenting the smoke of battle.

Don Ramon got to his feet, using his field glasses. A sudden thought had flashed

in on him. His father might be nearer than he had supposed, and might be engaging the enemy's outposts.

"It's off to the left, Diego!" he exclaimed, pointing.

"Not soldiers, my *señor*," Diego wagged his head sagely. "Soldiers don't shoot like that—pop, pop—fizzle—one, two, three—running fire."

Don Ramon's hand went to his pistol holster.

"You think—"

He glanced quickly at Diego. The old man was an experienced and daring fighter.

"Bandits, *sí*, my *señor*," Diego grinned. "What's worth their while may be worth ours, eh?"

Ramon straightened up and snapped his field glasses into focus.

"You're right—bandits after a carriage. There they come. *Diablo*, there are women in it!"

He swung around, shouted an order to his top sergeant, and ran down the hill, Diego at his heels. The chaparral was close and full of thorns, and it was a moment or two before they could see the road through a break in the cacti. They were approaching it from the hillside, and a shelf of rock hung out over a turn in it. They could hear the galloping of horses and the crunch of wheels. The driver was racing his carriage, and the crack of his whip came sharp as a pistol shot. Don Ramon made a signal with his hand, and his men dropped to their knees in the chaparral and waited.

There could hardly have been a more thrilling moment than that, as they crouched and waited in ambush, with the rattle of pistol shots approaching to the tune of galloping hoofs and a woman's screams; but Diego, close at Don Ramon's elbow, chuckled.

"An old hen, *señor*—hear her cackle!"

Young Castro drew his pistol, swung himself over the edge of the rock, and leaned out. He could see the carriage coming—a stately, old-fashioned vehicle, the kind the aristocracy used to journey to and fro among the haciendas. The frightened coachman was using his whip, and his two black mules were running so fast that the carriage swayed from side to side and rocked like a ship at sea. Beside it a horse ran riderless, and behind it came the pursuers—bandits, beyond a doubt, and gaining fast. Their progress had been stayed

for only a moment by the fall of the rider. Don Ramon could see him lying in the road—no bandit, but evidently a servant who had fired in defense of his mistress and had got his quietus, poor devil!

Diego—an old man, but spry, even among the cacti—hopped along the bluff on one leg. He got near enough to Don Ramon to whisper:

"Two women inside, *señor*. Shall I shoot that fellow in front—the bandit with the red handkerchief?"

Ramon did not answer. He had dropped suddenly over the edge of the rock. As his feet struck the road, twenty yards in front of the mules, Diego's gun talked. The frightened driver, believing that he was caught in an ambush, brought the mules to a stand and held up his hands. The stop was so sudden that the foremost bandit almost rode into the back of the carriage, just as Don Ramon's men swarmed out of the cacti.

The ensuing fight was sharp but short, for the bandits were outnumbered five to one. Old Diego had taken care of the gentleman with the red handkerchief. Of the others, two lay in the dust, and the remaining three fled without looking back.

## II

HAVING ordered the coachman to keep his place and hold the mules, Don Ramon went nearer to the carriage. The screams that had rent the air had stopped abruptly. An elderly *señora* was in a fainting fit, and had sunk into the arms of a girl, whose dark eyes looked over the unconscious woman's head toward Don Ramon at the carriage door.

"I don't know who you are, bandit," a young voice said imperiously, "but you can get some water somewhere, and there's a fan in the bottom of the carriage. Tia Carlotta has fainted."

Don Ramon sent Diego for water, opened the carriage door, and hunted for the fan. While he was doing it, he discovered Tia Carlotta's legs stiff with hysterics, and near them a pair of arched feet in high-heeled French shoes, and a pair of slender ankles in silk stockings. They were quite the most intriguing ankles he had seen in a twelvemonth, and he was a long while hunting for that fan.

"There it is, in the corner, stupid! Don't you see?"

The high young voice had no terror in

it. It was imperious, incisive, contemptuous. Don Ramon discovered a large yellow fan with a bullfight scene painted upon it in rich colors. He presented it with elaborate courtesy; but the girl barely thanked him, devoting herself to the old woman. Then, as Diego brought the water, and Tia Carlotta began to revive, she turned and looked out of the carriage.

"Where's poor Juan?" she demanded. "He—oh, you haven't killed him? You wretches!"

Don Ramon grinned shamelessly.

"He's alive, *señorita*. My men are bringing him now."

"Oh, Dolores, Dolores, they'll kill us!" Tia Carlotta came to herself, wailing aloud. She had just glimpsed Ramon's ragged but formidable followers.

"Nonsense!" replied Dolores, sharply.

She slipped out of the carriage and ran toward her wounded servant. As she went, she almost stumbled over a fallen bandit. Don Ramon followed her, and was close behind her when she straightened up and turned around. For the first time he saw her in the shadowless noon—a slip of a girl with glossy brown hair, a glowing skin, and eyes of velvet darkness. Ramon's heart stopped a beat and then raced suddenly.

"What does this mean?" she demanded imperiously. "Who killed this man, and that one? Not poor Juan. He fired but once, and his shot went wild—I saw that. He never could shoot anything. These are bandits—what are you?"

"A poor soldier, *señorita*. We were up on the hill and heard the shots. Happily we got here in time. Your aunt was merely frightened."

The girl turned her back on him, but when she bent over the wounded servant, her face was tender.

"Like a Madonna," thought Ramon, watching her.

"Juan must be put in the carriage with Tia Carlotta," she said quickly. "We"—she turned on Ramon—"can we go back? We've got to have a doctor for him."

"You can go forward, *señorita*. My orders take me north, and you can't go without an escort. My men will escort you. Diego, put the man in the carriage. *Señorita*, there'll be no room for you if—"

"I can ride—there's poor Juan's horse."

Don Ramon lifted her to the saddle, while Tia Carlotta made room for the wounded man, fretting and complaining.



"Señor, we shall all be murdered unless your men go with us," she wailed. "My husband is Don Fernando Pico—"

Don Ramon bowed over the old woman's shaking hand.

"I shall myself escort you to the Cordoba hacienda, *señora*. It's beyond these hills, but there's a doctor there."

"You will on no account leave us?" Tia Carlotta's chin shook with fear. "These horrible bandits!"

"They've been driven off, Tia Carlotta," Dolores said firmly. "We can drive on. These gentlemen"—she flashed a scornful glance at Don Ramon's nondescript followers—"mustn't go too far out of their way."

Young Castro's eyes met hers.

"I go with you, *señorita*," he said coolly. "My way lies there"—and he pointed ahead.

She said nothing, but her cheeks flamed as he closed the carriage door and directed the coachman to drive on, ordering his men to fall in line, only leaving a squad to bury the dead bandits.

The orders given, and the black mules in motion, Don Ramon mounted his horse and sent Diego to the rear. In front rode the slender, girlish figure of Dolores, with the sun on her uncovered head. She rode fast, and Ramon put spurs to his horse. He had ordered his men to escort the carriage, and they were moving at a snail's pace.

Far ahead galloped the girl. She rode well, and Ramon, himself qualified at any time for a circus rider, felt a thrill of admiration. She had not been wearing a habit. She had tucked up her narrow skirt and swung into the saddle like a boy. Like a beautiful boy she rode, and the sun made her brown hair the color of a ripe pecan.

Ramon remembered the one soft glimpse he had had of velvet eyes and tender lips as she hung over the wounded servant. He remembered, and his heart beat fast with a feeling of exultation as the space between them grew less and less, for his horse was the better of the two.

The road turned the shoulder of the hill and climbed steadily. The grayish green of the cacti melted into the green haze of distance. A mountain peak cut the sky line directly in front of them. It was very blue, after the fashion of Mexican mountains in the sunlight.

They had to pass through a defile, and below the road was the old railroad track.

Two years before, Don Ramon's father had been wounded in a battle here, and had fallen into Don Pedro's hands. The son remembered it, and his gray eyes were smoldering as his horse overtook the girl's. He laid his hand on her bridle and brought both horses to a stand. Dolores flung her head back and looked over her shoulder at him, her cheeks aflame.

"You have no right to stop me!" she said in a low voice.

"This is a dangerous place, *señorita*. You can't ride on alone."

Ramon's tone was one of command, but his gray eyes looked deep into her dark ones, and again he thought his heart missed a beat.

Dolores bit her lip. The red went up to her brown hair, and her eyes sparkled.

"It's dangerous to stop my father's daughter," she replied proudly. Then she pointed at the cacti, at the naked slope of the rock, at the hilltop. "Where's your danger, *señor*?" she demanded scornfully.

Ramon colored darkly.

"Do you see that spur of the hill?" He, too, pointed. "It can hide three thousand men. It has done so. But two years ago my father was ambushed there, wounded, and taken prisoner. It may hide the enemy now. You can't go that way alone."

The girl's hand went quickly to her throat—a futile little gesture, yet eloquent. She had seen her country ridden by soldiers, by rebels, by bandits. One night she had lain until daybreak behind a barricade of mattresses, for fear that the insurgents, who were rifling the town, would shoot up the inhabitants. She had seen bereavement come to many, death as suddenly as lightning, and the country still bled.

"Your father—he is still in prison, *señor*?"

"He's free, now, *señorita*, but he was in an iron cage in a cell in San Juan de Ulua for eight months."

"In a cage?" The girl's eyes widened with horror. "No, no, *señor*—not in a cage?"

Don Ramon's eyes met hers, and a flame leaped into them.

"In a cage, *señorita*, with the tide rising to his feet and falling to let in the rats. Eight months of it! He ate mildewed bread and drank foul water there because of the hatred of one man—his enemy, the enemy of our family."

"And that man, *señor*? Is he dead, your enemy who put your father in a cage?"

She was erect in her saddle, her dark eyes sparkled. Ramon Castro knew what she meant. No man who was a man would let such a wretch live!

He still held her horse, and they had not stirred in their saddles. The sun beat down on them. They could hear the trampling of the horses behind them, the heavy crunch on the upgrade; but it was as if these two were alone under the sky. Don Ramon's ears were filled with the drumming of his heart in his breast.

"I'm on my way now to kill him, Dolores," he said in a low voice, not knowing that he had spoken her name.

She nodded, looking at him gravely. She understood, for they were of the same blood—Spanish. Her heart beat, too, when she met his eyes.

He took his hand away from the bridle of her horse, and they rode on together. She no longer opposed his guidance.

At a turn in the trail they came upon a dead tree. It thrust out of a crevice in the rocks, and its roots were still deep there. Ramon Castro drew rein under it and pointed up at its gnarled branches, his face gray-white with anger.

"Do you see that tree, Dolores? It is accursed. It was only half dead when my father fell beneath it, wounded. His enemy put a rope across that bough up there and made a feint of hanging him upon it. Wounded as he was, a soldier and a gentleman, he would have been hanged; but his enemy thought better of it. Instead, the villain had him cut down and carried him to the cage in San Juan de Ulua. I"—Ramon drew a hard breath—"I came here to burn the tree, and then I, too, thought better of it. I left it to hang that fiend upon. Since then it has withered and died. There's a curse upon it!"

Dolores looked up at the tree and then at Ramon.

"Yes," she said, "a curse, surely—the curse of hate!"

"When I take him—that man—I shall bring him here and hang him upon that tree," Ramon went on. His voice was as soft as silk, and he smiled. For the first time the girl shuddered.

He saw it, and bent toward her, laying his hand over hers on her horse's bridle. She lifted her head, and their eyes met.

It seemed as if they had known each other a thousand years.

"Dolores!" he whispered softly.

She turned her face away, but she was not angry, and did not shake off his hand. There seemed to be a spell about that place. They rode on past the dead tree, the tree of hate. A vulture soared high overhead, but they did not see it.

### III

THE Cordoba hacienda was large, and had been beautiful before the last revolution. Both sides had used it, and had devoured it like a plague of locusts. Only the house remained, a huge yellow jail in appearance, with ironed windows.

Its mistress was a little frightened at the sight of Tia Carlotta and the wounded servant, but still hospitable, and she gathered them all in. Even Don Ramon's men were allowed to squat in the *patio*, where they had kept the chickens—before previous visitors devoured them all. The peon cook made hot bean soup for them, and fried peppers stuffed with cheese. Diego, told off to help Tia Carlotta and the wounded man, came into the inner *patio*, where Don Ramon was smoking a cigarette and waiting for Dolores.

"The old one's worse than a setting hen, *señor*," the old servant grumbled. "Nothing will do for her, and she's got the best room and the best bed. It's a pity you didn't let the bandits get her!"

Don Ramon laughed softly.

"She's old, and they would only have beaten her to get her money, Diego."

"So much the better!" Diego returned. "A woman is like a pecan tree, *señor*, the better for a good beating. What's the name of the young one?" he added, curiously, his sharp old black eyes puckered at the corners as he peered at his master.

Don Ramon made a sign, his eyes fixed on the door opposite. It had opened, and Dolores stood there, the moonlight lifting her face out of the shadows and making it more beautiful than even the daylight.

Diego vanished, and there was no one there but Don Ramon and the girl. The air was heavy with the fragrance of yellow jasmine, and there was no sound but the far-off tinkling of a mandolin, as one of Don Ramon's men sang "La Paloma." The two sat down beside the fountain and talked softly of the night, of the moon, and—as young people will the world over

—of love. Presently they heard Tia Carlotta's complaining voice speaking to the doctor who had been attending Juan.

"He will be about again in two weeks, so the doctor told me awhile ago," said Don Ramon.

Dolores looked up at him and smiled.

"You haven't told me of your enemy to-night," she said, suddenly. "You have never told me his name—the man you will kill to avenge your father's sufferings in that cage."

"Because I can think of nothing to-night but—but you," Don Ramon replied gently.

They had risen, now, and stood close together, the moonlight making a glory about them and etching the *patio* walls with lovely shadows.

"Dolores, I never saw you until to-day, and if I never saw you again I should love you all my life," he said gravely.

She did not speak. His eyes held hers. She made a movement as if to leave him, and Don Ramon caught her in his arms. She lay there for a moment, her face against his breast, and he bent and kissed her.

"Dolores!"

"Ramon!" she whispered, and then she pushed him away, her hands against his breast.

"The name—the name of your enemy whom you go to kill?" she whispered.

"Don Pedro," he answered, and even at that name his voice did not lose its deep note of tenderness. "Don Pedro Alvarado," he added.

Dolores slipped out of his arms and ran to the door opposite. He called to her, and she turned there and looked back at him, her eyes dark and her face white in the moonlight.

"Adios!" she said softly. "Adios, señor!"

"Dolores!"

Don Ramon sprang toward her, but she was gone, and the door was shut in his face.

#### IV

At daybreak the bugle sounded, and the little troop was mounting, but Don Ramon stood alone in the *patio* with Diego.

"When did they go?" he demanded, white-lipped. "I heard nothing, Diego. Where are they? The wounded man is here—they are not!"

"They went in the night, señor, and I wouldn't stop them," Diego replied, stubbornly. "*Madre de Dios*, don't kill me, Don Ramon!"

For Ramon had seized him and shaken him violently.

"How dared you permit it? Why didn't you call me? Fool, idiot, traitor!"

He shook Diego, and the old man turned livid under his hands.

"Let me go, my señor! I wouldn't stop them, I dared not! Señor, I know her name, now—the young girl's. She's the niece of Doña Carlotta, but she's the daughter—"

Don Ramon's hands were at the old servant's throat. His eyes blazed.

"Diego, if you dare to—"

"Don Ramon, the saints know I speak the truth! She's Dolores Alvarado, Don Pedro's only daughter—his only child."

Ramon's hands fell at his sides, his face turned gray as ashes, his white lips set. He knew that Diego had never lied to him. He stared at the old retainer like a madman, but he said nothing.

Diego, rubbing his bruises, watched him pitifully.

"Señor—Don Ramon—" he murmured.

Young Castro turned, walked out of the *patio*, and mounted his horse. Without a word, without a sign, he rode on, and his men followed.

Over the crest of the mountain the sun was rising. Behind them was the dead tree on which Ramon had vowed to hang Don Pedro Alvarado. He rode furiously, sparing neither men nor horses. She was ahead, she had four hours' start, but he would overtake her, unless she gave him the slip at the crossroads.

Suddenly he remembered the crossroads. In an hour he would come to them, and both roads led toward the Alvarado hacienda, which she must have left the day before, and to which she was now returning. He understood now—she had not meant to lead him there, she wanted to go away from it! He had turned her back, and she might elude him at the crossroads. One road was shorter than the other, but worse traveling. The coachman was likely to take the longer but easier way. Don Ramon chose the shorter road, and his men followed.

The hours had passed, noonday was upon them, hot and white and dry, with the crackle of dead brush on the trail. The

men waited for the noonday halt, riding fast but sulkily. Only Diego knew, and Diego's eyes were on his young master's back. What did Don Ramon plan? What folly? What madness? The love of a woman is worse than the sting of a viper, for the poison runs in the brain as well as in the blood.

Diego saw Don Ramon rise in his stirrups and use his field glasses; but he could have seen nothing, for he dropped back to the saddle and rode on.

Suddenly Diego saw a black smoke ahead of them in the valley, and smelled burning wood. The men about him began to straighten up in their saddles, and their weapons rattled, for they had heard firing.

Don Ramon struck spurs to his jaded horse and rode to the crest of the hill. Below him lay a valley which had been green as jade, but it was seared now with flame and smoke. In the heart of it, white through the fog of fire, the big house of Don Pedro Alvarado still stood untouched. The signs of conflict were everywhere. Dead horses and wounded men were scattered on the trampled ground, while a surgeon moved to and fro, bandaging and administering what aid he could, feeling a still heart sometimes, or lifting a dying man to drink water. Here was a trench half filled up, where they had been burying the dead, and a sad-faced priest moved away from it, muttering a blessing.

A fog of smoke hung about the house, like a gray veil over the white face of a woman. In front of it a tall man sat in the saddle on a big bay mare. He stooped a little, and had a hollow chest and a white, sunken face; but there was power in him, and the long habit of command. As Don Ramon rode down the hill he saw the striking figure of the tall horseman, and knew that his father had conquered. Had he already killed Don Pedro?

The young man rode on, his horse picking its way amid the debris. Here and there a soldier saw him, and saluted. The smoke of battle got into his throat and his eyes. Then Don Mariano turned and saw him, and they both dismounted.

"My son!" cried General Castro.

"Father!"

Being Latins, they embraced and kissed.

"There's been a battle?"

Don Ramon's face was white under the tan, but Don Mariano did not notice it.

"My old enemy, son," replied Castro,

and there was a fierce light in his eyes, the light of conquest. "I trailed the old fox to his hole, and we fought. This time I won, and he is my prisoner!"

Ramon threw his arm across his saddle and leaned upon it. His knees were like water under him.

"Have you—is he alive, father?"

General Castro smiled bleakly.

"He's alive, my son, and he will live to die slowly!"

Don Ramon wet his dry lips. Out of the tail of his eye he saw old Diego edging nearer.

"Do you mean to—torture him, father?"

"Oh, only a few rats, with an iron cage and mildewed bread," replied his father.

"We might add snakes—they're plentiful out here in the chaparral, only a snake bite would be too swift. Ah, Diego, old fellow, so you've come back with my boy?"

Diego grinned, saluting. Then he edged nearer to the younger Castro.

"The black mules are here, my *señor*," he whispered to Don Ramon.

"What's that?"

General Castro swung around, his sword striking against his spurs, and his keen eyes caught the expression on his son's face. He waited.

"Don Pedro's daughter," said Ramon slowly. "She's here?"

"She's with him." General Castro's tone was dry. "She came—she and his old screaming sister—after the battle. I let the girl go to him. Had she stayed away, I might have had him shot at once," he added grimly. "She has given me time to think it all out!"

For the first time Ramon looked at his father with a feeling of revulsion, almost of horror. Yesterday he himself had planned to hang Don Pedro on the dead tree; to-day General Castro's bitter hatred struck a cold chill to his son's heart.

"Have you seen her—seen Dolores?" he asked.

Castro turned to look at his son in sheer amazement, and saw old Diego make a sign behind Ramon's back. He understood the sign. Diego touched first his heart and then his head, and pointed to the black mules, still hitched to a mud-splashed carriage, but calmly cropping the grass.

The father's eyes were hard when they came back to the son's face. He made a sign to Diego to leave them.

"Yes, I've seen Dolores," he said slowly.



"My son, three generations of our families have fought to the knife. Her great-grandfather and your great-grandfather fought it out at San Luis, and your ancestor sent hers to prison and kept him there until he died. A political martyr, his people called him, and your grandfather suffered for it. His house was burned, and his cattle were stolen. He challenged Pedro Alvarado, and they came together to fight, but just before the duel your grandfather dropped dead. Don Pedro, when he was governor, put me in San Juan de Ulua; now I'm in his shoes, and I have him in my power. Dolores is the last of the old viper's brood, Ramon!"

Don Ramon took his arm from the saddle and came nearer, his face still white under the tan.

"Father, I love Dolores. I love her so much that when you kill Don Pedro I shall give her my pistol and tell her to take my life to pay for his, for without her my life is worthless."

Don Mariano stared at his son, dumfounded. Sheer astonishment kept him silent for a long moment, and then he spoke in a strange voice:

"You're my son, and you know that this man kept me in a cage in a filthy cell for eight months—and yet you stand there and say you love his daughter! Are you mad?"

"I think I am mad," replied Don Ramon, stubbornly; "mad with love of her. Father, I meant to hang Don Pedro to that dead tree. I told her so before I knew who she was; but I love her. There's been no blood shed yet, but if you kill Don Pedro she can have my life to pay for it!"

"You young fool!" said Don Mariano. "You young madman! She's of the viper's brood!" Then he called to one of his captains. "Joaquin, come here! Arrest my son and keep him in custody until I order his release. Ramon, give up your sword!"

His son looked at the general with a drawn face, saluted, and handed his sword and pistol to the captain. With a proud gesture of anger, General Castro turned away.

"We'll hang Don Pedro at sunset," he said to his aid.

V

A PRISONER in his own house, Don Pedro sat in a straight-backed Spanish chair,

his thin hands grasping the arms, his sunken eyes red with anger and the smoke of his burning fields. Hatred was in his face—fierce, unslaked hatred, and bitter pride. He was beaten, but he was not broken. His fingers twisted on the carved wood of his chair until the knuckles whitened, and he gnawed his white mustache, staring in front of him.

Not even the drooping figure of his daughter moved him. He had taken Dolores in his arms when she came to him, but it had been only for a moment of yielding. He was thinking of his enemy now—of Don Mariano.

"*Madre de Dios*, if I'd only killed him!" he thought, and muttered not prayers, but curses.

Dolores heard them. She had been standing in the barred window, looking out, and she had seen Don Ramon give up his sword. She had seen, too, the white rage in General Castro's face. Her heart beat in her throat. Had Ramon tried to save her father?

Suddenly she went to Don Pedro and knelt beside his chair.

"Father!" she said—one word, but poignant with feeling.

He looked down at her, and his face worked. Something seemed to snap in his heart. He put his hand on her head with the shadow of a caress.

"That old weasel will hang me, Dolores—there isn't a doubt about that. You must go with your aunt to San Luis, where I meant you to go when you started away yesterday."

"Father!" The girl caught her breath. She was a little afraid of him, but she had to know this thing. "Father, did you keep General Castro in an iron cage in San Juan de Ulua for eight months?"

Don Pedro stared at her, and a sharp change came over his face.

"Who told you?"

"His—his son, Don Ramon."

"How dared you talk to one of that devil brood—you, my daughter?"

"He saved us from the bandits. Tia Carlotta tried to tell you all about it, but you wouldn't listen to her. We rode over the hills together, he and I. Father, is it true?"

"You rode beside a Castro? You talked with that old demon's son? You—you—"

Don Pedro choked, rising from his chair, a fierce, revengeful figure, an old lion

caught, but untamed. Dolores looked at him with searching eyes.

"Father, the cage—is it true?" she insisted sharply.

"Yes!" he snapped. "*Diablo*, if only I'd hanged the old rascal to that tree!"

"He'll kill you," said Dolores; "of course he will! Father, it will kill me!" She held out quivering young hands. "Father, Don Ramon will try to save you!"

"Don Ramon? His son?" Don Pedro seized her by the arm and shook her violently. "What's that man to you?"

Tears were running down the girl's white face, but she looked up bravely.

"I love him!" she said.

"You love him? Bah!" Don Pedro flung her from him with a gesture of scorn. "Get away from me! You're no daughter of mine!"

As the girl reeled back, she was suddenly aware that the door had opened behind her, and that General Castro stood there with a squad of soldiers. Dolores swung toward him, her face still wet with tears.

"Oh, General Castro!" she sobbed chokingly. "For the love of God, don't kill my father! Don't put blood between us, between—"

She stopped, swaying against the wall, her shaking hands clenched against her breast and her great eyes black in the whiteness of her face.

Don Pedro was staring at her fiercely.

"You're no daughter of mine," he belated, "begging life from a Castro!"

General Castro came into the room, and stood for an instant looking at Dolores. Then he turned to one of his officers.

"Go and send me Don Ramon," he said sternly.

Dolores sobbed, shrinking from her father's fierce eyes and covering her face with her hands. She did not even see Don Ramon when he entered, unarmed, and as white-faced as she was.

"Ramon," said his father, "you swore to hang the man who had caged me. You swore to hang him on that dead tree up there. There he stands. Keep your oath—take him and hang him!"

Dolores looked up.

"Ramon!" she cried.

Don Ramon turned and caught her in his arms. He held her close.

"Father, you can hang me as a man forsworn. I can't do it. I love Dolores, and I won't give her up!"

Dolores lifted her quivering face to his.

"And I love you!" she said.

Don Pedro Alvarado took a step forward, his hands working.

"Let that girl go, you—you—" he began, and then he remembered that he had repudiated her. His lips moved, but no more words came.

General Castro looked from one to the other. Then he stepped to the door and closed it. They were face to face, these ancient enemies.

"Don Pedro, you're my prisoner. I'm the governor of this state, now, as you were once, and you're in my hands."

Don Pedro nodded his head, stiffly.

"I wish I'd killed you!" he said fiercely. "Go ahead and kill me!"

Suddenly Don Mariano smiled.

"Pedro," he said, "look at them—my son and your daughter! Hate is old, but love is young. We're beaten, old fox! Eight months in an iron cage you had me, but forgive her, and I'll forgive you—here's my hand on it!"

"Father!" sobbed Dolores, clinging to Ramon.

Don Pedro turned slowly, averted his eyes, heard his daughter sob, and turned again. Reluctantly he put out his hand, and Don Mariano took it with a wry face.

"Dolores," whispered Ramon in her ear, "come with me! I'm going to cut down that tree before those two get at it again!"

### THE SLEEPING

ALL that I love is sleeping—

Why am I here awake?

The whole world seems a weeping

For some lost loved one's sake.

Made out of vanished faces,

And hearts that no more beat—

O world of lonely places,

And unreturning feet!

Richard Le Gallienne

# "In This Corner—"

WHIPPER NELSON AND WHIRLWIND PONT, HEAVYWEIGHT  
PUGS, AGREE TO FAKE THEIR FIGHT FOR THE BEST  
INTEREST OF THE BANK ROLL, BUT THE WELL-  
KNOWN HUMAN EQUATION INTERVENES

By Charles Francis Coe

**M**EN, like the proverbial extremes, sometimes meet—and the encounter may be more portentous than appears on the surface. This axiom particularly applies to prize fight managers.

Mr. Timmie Quigley, of sartorial splendor, patent leather hair, and horn-rim glasses, met Mr. Dixie Nixon on Broadway at Forty-Fourth Street. At the immediate suggestion of Timmie, they adjourned toward a quiet restaurant with a chain on the door.

Timmie Quigley was very well known. Everywhere he looked he saw some one that he knew, and he looked everywhere. On their brief journey to the restaurant, his smile and nod of recognition worked overtime. His right hand, slightly battered from an aforesaid pugilistic activity, waved a welcome to multitudes.

Dixie Nixon was not known along Broadway. His lugubrious countenance contrasted with Timmie's smile as strikingly as his "fire sale" clothing jarred alongside the faultless garments of his guide.

About Mr. Quigley there was something truly democratic. He did not, by even a raised eyebrow, permit his own perfection to emphasize the general imperfection he detected in the rest of mankind.

"At this joint where we are going," he said to Mr. Nixon, "they are offering milk-fed gin at seventy-five cents the saucer, and I feel kittenish."

"Me, too," Dixie avowed, earnestly. "Lead the way." His tone was as sorrowful as his expression. "I certainly need to know a dive or two like that," he added, feelingly.

So they smiled their way past the

chained door and into the sanctum where other kittens frolicked illegally. Here, also, larcenous plots were hatched and rehatched, accepted and rejected, until, finally, some plan for the making of easy money was perfected. They were the whispering sort, these people in the quiet restaurant.

They leaned over narrow tables and snubbed out fancy cigarettes in drinking glasses, and sometimes made notes with a pencil on the tablecloth, and then quickly smudged them out when their auditors showed due understanding. Generally the hieroglyphics on the linen were prefaced with the dollar sign.

Timmie led Dixie to a table in the corner, and smilingly called for the potion.

"This is my pal, Dixie Nixon," he told the waiter, "and he's O. K."

"Maybe he better gimme a card," Dixie suggested.

The waiter shrugged. "Nit," he said. "When Timmie introduces a man, I knows him."

The first indulgence served as a lubricant to the pair. Mr. Quigley, particularly, spoke that which was in his heart.

"Business," he announced, in his best confidential tone, "is rotten."

"Business?" Mr. Nixon asked, hyperbole manifest in tone and gesture. "I could fall in love even with rotten business, myself. There just ain't no business, good or bad."

## II

TIMMIE QUIGLEY shrugged his shoulders so that faint wrinkles upset the perfection of his coat. His brows lifted behind the rims of his glasses, and his battered right

hand swept over the table and toyed with the glass he had emptied.

"It ain't as bad as that, Dixie," he said solemnly. "With me it's just a run of tough breaks, that's all. Never seen anything like it in my life. Everything I touch goes sour."

"I can't even find anything to touch," Dixie lamented.

But Timmie was intent upon his own troubles; anxious to find relief in the telling of them to a friend. He talked on, quite heedless of Dixie's somewhat pointed remark.

"Did you ever hear of Big Schmalz?" he asked, leaning across the table again and throwing into his words the essence of drama. "No!" he answered his own question emphatically. "You never did hear of Big Schmalz. I know you never did, because nobody ever did. But Big is a pug—what we used to call, in the good old days, a beer pug. He might have made a great wrestler."

"I never heard of him," Dixie grunted.

"He comes from Milwaukee," Timmie went on; "that is, he comes from there if he ever comes from anywhere. He is a pork and beaner, Dixie. He had two extra chins the night he climbed in the ring with my fighter, Whipper Nelson."

"Whipper Nelson?" Dixie asked blandly. "How long ago was this?"

"Less'n a week ago," Timmie replied, a bit testily.

"Whipper Nelson," Dixie ventured, to be facetious, "fought his first prelim bout the afternoon that young Napoleon enlisted to learn the soldier business."

"He has had time to learn the tricks inside the ropes," Timmie countered. "He knows them all."

"He is an antique, Timmie," Mr. Nixon declared. "Next month you will hear from Mr. Smith, of that Smithsonian place where the first automobile is."

"Whipper gets by with careful managing," Mr. Quigley insisted. "I know he is old, but I took him out of the middles and carried him up into the heavies. He does better there. His tricks fool the bigger and slower boys."

"You're fairly smart," Dixie conceded, and Timmie admitted it at once by the appreciative beam in his eye.

"I get by, Dixie," he said confidently. "But these breaks! First off, we fight this large bum Schmalz out in Wisconsin. My

boy, Whipper, taps that Dutch elephant with everything but the water bucket all through the fight—and in the very last round, what does Big Schmalz do?"

Timmie leaned close again, and made his words the more impressive by lowering his voice and tapping the table with the end of a twisted finger. "This is what he does," he went on in his question-and-answer style; "with one wild sock he knocks out all of Whipper's front teeth."

"They really should 'a' been out long ago, though," Dixie said, sympathetically. "No guy has a right to get by without store teeth as long as Whipper has."

"Well—anyhow—they're out!" Timmie complained. "And just when I could work Whipper into a match with Lefty Quirt at one of the big ball parks."

"Quirt!" Dixie cried in amazement. "Lefty Quirt! You talking about sticking Whipper into a ring with that boy?" His tone expressed infinite disbelief.

"Sure!" Timmie replied calmly. "What if Lefty is the champion? That means big money, and a nice split for us. We know Whipper'll take a pasting, but what of that? Is there any difference between a pasting from a champ and a pasting from anybody else?"

"I guess not," Dixie agreed, after a few seconds' thought. "But if Schmalz caves in Whipper's front teeth, this guy Quirt'll see to it that he never eats nothing but soup as long as he lives."

"Which ain't got a thing to do with it!" Mr. Quigley said, a bit savagely. "The promoters owe me a lot. I get around a good deal, and I always play close with them. They want Quirt to defend his title this summer—and there ain't anybody that Quirt'd rather defend it against than Whipper."

"But will they go for a shot like that?" Dixie wondered. "Can you sell anybody a ticket for such a thing?"

"Certainly! Whipper has a rep. All we need is an elimination bout with some bum he is sure to take, and we can sail into the ball park in two months for a title bout. The least we can get is twelve and a half per cent."

"I would rather," Dixie stated, plaintively, "go out and try to sell tickets to a park bench in January!"

"What you don't know, Dixie," Timmie said commiseratingly, "is plenty! The promoters will play with me on this if I



can find somebody for Whipper to push over within the next ten days. It is not so easy. Whipper's teeth are gone, and his gums are tender. We must be very careful of him."

"You said a mouthful," Dixie conceded.

"That is the point. I used to send Whipper around to talk big to the newspaper boys, but I can't do that now. He talks like a Sunday school pupil with a lisp. His mouth looks like a bowling alley with all the pins down when he opens it."

### III

DIXIE had nothing constructive to offer. He might, from his appearance, have been stupefied by the managerial possibilities the big town offered. Timmie, inspired by his own problems, went on:

"All we need is a hitless bum that Whipper can beat, so the newspaper boys 'll have something to write about. After that we bust into the ball park and get real dough."

At last Dixie showed a human interest. His eyes became alight, and he threw his chest against the edge of the table so that his face was close to Timmie's.

"A hitless wonder?" he asked. "Timmie, if you really mean that you want a guy that has never hit a man hard yet—a guy with thirty professional fights in his history, and never a solid punch landed—I got him!"

"Who do you mean?" Mr. Quigley demanded, his fingers becoming animate once more, and tapping the table top, his brown eyes alert.

"This here may be a break for me, too!" Mr. Nixon explained, hopefully. "I mean Whirlwind Pont."

"I never even heard of the guy!" Timmie declared.

"He is the greatest mattress the fight game has ever produced," Dixie assured him.

"You think," Timmie said cautiously, "that Whipper would be quite safe in a ring with this guy?"

"Safe? Don't make me laugh!" Dixie gulped. "I tell you this bimbo has never hit a man yet. All he does is skid around on his tights."

"Does he look fairly good in there?" Timmie asked, his forehead wrinkling into corrugations of thought.

"You bet! The funny part is, he's always trying to fight," Dixie replied. "I

never seen a guy take it like he can. Punches to him are like rain to a window-pane. They just bounce off without breaking a thing."

"You talk pretty," Timmie admitted.

"Anybody," Dixie assured him, "could talk pretty about Whirlwind Pont. He's the inventor of the trial horse idea! Bring him up here and leave Whipper dust off his dial as much as you like. There is your rib up for the shot in the ball park. We will bill this Pont as the Southern Assassin—or mebbe the Dixie Demon!"

"And Whipper is sure to beat him?" Timmie asked again. "I can't take no chances. I never heard of Pont."

"After the fight you never will! I'm telling you straight, Timmie, this is the mug you want. I need a break as bad as anybody could, and I'm ready to say you can have this set-up any way you want him, so long as we get a little sugar for ourselves. And it won't be so much for the Whirlwind, either. It 'll be mostly me—I'm his manager, ain't I?"

"If everything is like you say," Timmie remarked, "it might be possible."

Then, as eagerness marked the manager of Whirlwind Pont, Mr. Quigley opened his cigarette case, snapped a match into flame along his belt, and winked suggestively at a somewhat spotted but highly attentive waiter. There was an air of efficiency about Timmie. His every move was clever. He was convincing.

"Yes," he said, after a time, "it does sound possible. With my pull with the promoters they have almost got to listen to what I want—that goes without saying. And I trust you, too, Dixie. I know there wouldn't be any crosses hung over us."

"You know I'm on the up and up, Timmie!" Dixie protested, plainly aghast at the very hint of double dealing. "There ain't no argument there at all. I'll play the game with you all the way. A fight at almost any price is a sweet break for me right now."

Timmie lapsed into deep thought, which furrowed his brow once more. His fingers roved over the tablecloth in darting motions that might have reflected what was in his mind. He seemed to be in search of the proper angle.

"All the way?" he asked presently. "You'll play the game all the way, Dixie?" Mystery was in his tone.

Dixie ran his tongue nervously over his

lips, glanced warily behind him, then leaned close.

"I said it, and I mean it!" he whispered. "I'll play the game. What is your idea, Timmie? Do you want the Whirlwind to take a dive so that Whipper can get this money shot with Lefty Quirt? Is that what you are thinking, Timmie?"

#### IV

CALMLY, with a grandeur that impressed and a coolness that was like struck steel, Timmie acknowledged that that was exactly the idea. By way of impressing upon Dixie the depth and breadth of the proposition, Timmie lowered one eyelid. There was something owl-like in the gesture, if not an uttermost wisdom.

"I will fix every detail," Dixie promised vehemently. "Whatever you want, that you will get. I only wish you knew the Whirlwind. The only thing he does, Timmie, is whirl. I have seen him socked till he shook like a malaria chill. And fall? Say, when that mug falls, there is something really graceful about it. He does it pretty, Timmie—pretty!"

"He's used to the diving act?" Timmie asked, suspiciously. "A regular deep sea boy, maybe?"

"Not the way you mean, Timmie. I don't think he ever faked a fight in his life. He's head heavy, or something. I've seen him go down twelve times in six rounds."

"And get up?" Timmie demanded, interestedly. "This mug will get up after a real paste on the pan?"

"Get up!" Dixie exploded. "Does he get up? For no apparent reason he gets up. He spends hours getting up. He tires everybody out by getting up. He's like the well-known sun in the morning, Timmie—dead sure to come up."

"Maybe he is the guy, at that," Mr. Quigley said complacently. "He sounds a good deal like what we want. Your chatter about little money and plenty of game-ness has the flavor of home cooking to me. Just how much will we have to pay this punching bag?"

"He could be knocked into Paradise, Timmie, for one hundred bucks!"

"One hundred," Timmie echoed. "But it sounds good. He'll get the hundred. Where is he at now?"

"In Mobile. He will come whenever I wire him the dough—and I will wire that

any time you will lend it to me," Dixie promised.

"He gets a hundred and expenses," Timmie snapped, decisively; "say sixty-five bucks for expenses. And to show you how nice I feel toward you, Dixie, your end will be two hundred and fifty. We will take Whipper's end of the purse and my end, and your end, and bet the works that Whipper knocks this goof cold inside of six rounds. Then you fix it with Whirlwind to do a dive in the third round, and—"

Timmie's words trailed off into another amazing wink. Dixie giggled in delight. "Sure, Timmie," he said, "I lost my sentiment years ago! I'm on—and I can fix the Whirlwind easy enough. For one hundred plasters he would gnaw down the Woolworth Building."

But Timmie's lid remained over his eye. Accompanying the wink there was a slight indrawing of the chin, and his open eye fastened steadily upon Dixie.

"But you don't drag down your end, Dixie," he said, evenly, "till the fight is over, and this Whirlwind takes the dive in the third as per agreement!"

"That suits me!" Dixie admitted readily enough. "Just see that I get his expenses in time. I will wire him to-day, stating when he shall come, and we can send the dough then. I don't dare get him up here too soon, Timmie. If he was to train in a gym here, some one would upset the entire picture with a smack on his leather kisser!"

And so, from a casual meeting, portent grew.

#### V

MANAGER TIMMIE QUIGLEY, in close touch with the fistic powers, and really deserving consideration by reason of favors executed, stated to them that Whipper Nelson would fight a certain heavyweight—Whirlwind Pont, otherwise known as the Dixie Demon—in what was to be an elimination bout for the privilege, later on, of meeting Lefty Quirt for the title in the ball park.

It was really quite simple. The promoters wanted Quirt to fight for them, and they knew that Quirt would be delighted to find no stronger opposition than tottering old Whipper Nelson. Timmie Quigley had his way.

The match was announced. Through

channels all his own, Timmie saw that abundant publicity was given the coming fray. To the newspaper men he stated that Whirlwind Pont was the leading heavy of the South. There would be, he said, a distinct sectional flavor to the bout, and the winner of it would be the logical man to match with Lefty Quirt for the title. Lefty had, in fact, already signed to meet the winner.

Timmie Quigley, Dixie Nixon, and the veteran Whipper Nelson, met in the chained-door restaurant after the announcement had been made, and went into details. Except for a word here and there, the toothless warrior was content that Timmie should manage affairs. Whipper had considerable difficulty talking through his denuded gums.

"Thith plan thounds good," he declared, when the scheme had been made clear to him. "But doth it make any differenth how long thith bimbo lath with me? If I knock him in the firth round, do we win juth the thame?"

"Certainly!" Timmie replied. "But, anyhow, he will do a dive in the third."

"Thometimes it ith hard to make a gallop look good," Whipper pointed out. "Can I hit thith joke ath hard ath I like?"

Dixie threw back his head in delight. His laugh would have pealed had this restaurant not been a chained realm.

"Hit him?" he whispered, then. "Hit him as hard and as often as you like, Whipper. There ain't anything in his head to knock out. He was born with two strikes called on him. The only way he'll hit you back is on the rebound."

"They thaid that about Big Thmalth, too," Whipper moaned, his blunt fingers running tenderly over his battered lips.

"Whipper will do exactly as I tell him—that settles that," Dixie asserted. "Hit him as hard as you like. The crowd goes for knockdowns, anyway. If you happen to knock him loose from his thinker, what of it? We win, anyway. Ain't I agreeing to wait for my money till the whole thing is over?"

Timmie nodded his understanding and satisfaction, drummed softly with his finger tips, deftly adjusted his tie, winked at the waiter, and terminated the series of gestures by flicking the ash of his cigarette halfway across the restaurant. There was a certain manner to Timmie.

"Third round, he diveth," Whipper re-

peated doggedly. His air was that of a man who intends to see a program executed to the prearranged letter. "I pathte him plenty—and in the third round he thayth pathted, right?"

The others assured him of the correctness of the statement.

"I will handle the money," Timmie announced. "We guarantee this bounding Whirlwind one hundred bucks, which he will get from the promoters the night of the fight. He is the only one of us that gathers a dime until we all collect. I sink the rest of the dough on Whipper to win inside six rounds."

"What could be sweeter?" Dixie queried, palms upward, and brows lifted. "It is a sure thing."

"He diveth in the third round," Whipper mumbled again.

At Timmie's signaled order, there was forthcoming more of the pale fluid to the dingy glasses. The die was cast. Perfection had smiled upon every detail of their plan.

"There remains," said Timmie, "nothing but the ballyhoo, which I will take care of. You, Dixie, will be quoted as often as I can manage. Whipper can call it training and keep his kisser away from the leather. This Whirlwind laddie had better stay home until the day before he uses his bathing suit."

## VI

So it worked out. Dixie made glaring statements about the terrific fistic prowess of Whirlwind Pont. He regarded Pont as the best bet the ring offered a waiting public.

Whipper Nelson, Dixie said, was facing the sunset of a glorious career. He hated, of course, to see Whipper pass into the realm of has-beens, and he was sorry that his man, Whirlwind Pont, must be the one to speed that unhappy but inevitable ending. However, every dog has its day.

Timmie Quigley, on his part, welcomed this severe test of his man's fighting powers. He was quoted thus in the sport columns:

For years I have pleaded the case of Whipper Nelson to a heedless public. They have not seen the facts. They have not realized that champions have run from Whipper; that he has been deprived of his opportunity to gain the diadem rightfully his. The champion has agreed to meet the winner of this fight, and that winner will be Whipper.

Bring on this Dixie Demon. Whipper will walk through him to a championship battle. And he will win them both. This is the chance we have sought for three years. Even Whipper, hardened as he is to the trials of the ring, wiped a tear of gratitude from his eye when this chance finally came. He will knock out this Pont cyclone—knock him cold. I am seldom wrong on fighters.

To which Dixie Nixon dutifully replied through the medium of the press:

Does Quigley think I am unconscious? Whirlwind will claim that title fight immediately after knocking over Whipper Nelson. There is only one title. If there were two, Nelson might have a chance. You can say for me that, after this bout, Whipper won't even have his back teeth left.

Whipper's lips, sunken over tender gums, remained creased for long periods in silence. He spoke little, because to speak was to engender wondering smiles on the faces of strangers. Sometimes people laughed when they heard his lisping speech.

Down in Mobile, Whirlwind Pont, acting under the strictest orders from Dixie Nixon, maintained a muteness that would have a clam jealous. He said nothing, but merely practiced, as Dixie assured Timmie Quigley, the art of getting up after being knocked down.

So the four principals in a plot of which only three of them were fully aware, passed the hours leading up to the crucial moment. Timmie was too much the man of affairs to consider the fight in other than a practical manner. There was, he figured, a definite amount of sure money involved, and this was all he cared about.

The fight drew moderately well. Expenses, according to the promoters, would be met by gate receipts, and they proclaimed themselves quite willing to wait for their profits until the Quirt-Nelson fight occurred in the ball park.

On the afternoon of the elimination battle, Timmie cautioned Dixie once more to have a thorough understanding with Whirlwind Pont about that third round.

"See that he goes down and stays down," Timmie said, warningly. "Sometimes these guys slip."

"He is fixed," Dixie assured him. "He got here last night, and I gave him a long talk. He did a little road work in Central Park this morning just to oil up the customers a bit. Don't worry!"

Whipper Nelson, as befitted a contender for the world's championship, avoided

his adversary. His attitude was that of a man who knows his own class. He was of the fistic great, and he knew that Whirlwind Pont was only a medium through which his greatness might find expression.

The first time the fighters met face to face was when they climbed into the ring. Whipper, known to the fans for years, received a friendly welcome. Whirlwind, unknown, but clothed in a bathrobe of brilliant purple, which Timmie Quigley had furnished for the occasion, created only a rustle of curiosity.

Pont was a big man. Even through the folds of the bathrobe his shoulders hunched into massiveness. He carried a bullet head on a bole neck, and his brows beetled with ferocity. He wore a week-old beard. At a glance, one might say that Whirlwind was fully deserving of his nickname.

## VII

"THAT guy," Whipper said to Timmie as they stood in their corner, "should be pothing ath a model for animal crackerth!"

"Don't do nothing foolish, now," Timmie admonished him. "He knows his end of this racket, and you know yours. Make it look good. If he goes out real, so much the better. Don't be afraid to paste him."

Whipper nodded understandingly. The referee called the two gladiators to the center of the ring. Whipper, his toothless lip uppermost in his thoughts, spoke not a word as instructions were given. Whirlwind was equally silent. They glared at each other a moment, shook hands perfunctorily, and returned to their corners.

The crowd settled back as bathrobes were slipped from rippling shoulder muscles. Grease was rubbed upon battered faces to prevent a cut and to make an opponent's blows glance, if possible. The corners were cleared for action. There was much striking of matches about the ring-side. Then the bell clanged and action started.

Both men moved toward the center of the ring, Whipper with the air of experience and a certain grace, Whirlwind after the downright manner of a pachyderm. Whipper brushed aside Pont's awkward left, and darted a sharp right across to the whiskers.

The whiskers shook. Whirlwind took a backward step, and the crowd offered vociferous praise to the assailant.

Whipper next weaved in close, feinted



his man into a grotesque tangle of arms and twisted feet, then shot his right again. He scarcely could have missed the target. The blow landed with a sharp thud, and Whirlwind went to the canvas with a bump that rattled the lights over the ring.

The crowd arose as Pont fell. It was somewhat on the order of a seesaw, the crowd up and Whirlwind down.

After that, Whipper did not spare his man. He hit him again and again, and each time he scored cleanly Whirlwind thundered to the canvas. But each time he fell he arose promptly and smilingly, and plodded after Whipper with the blind courage of a fanatic faith in his invulnerability to punishment.

Dixie, from his point of vantage in Pont's corner, gazed across the ring and caught Timmie Quigley's glance. He smiled a message of his own vindication, and Timmie's eyelid flicked downward and blotted out his retina like a death mask.

Here was perfection in a ring spectacle. The crowd was in a frenzy, its lustful appetite rejoicing in this battering and falling and getting up.

At the end of the feverish round, Whirlwind Pont had crashed to the canvas four times, and each time he had arisen before the referee could start counting. The crowd never before had seen a fighter just like this heavyweight.

He was a prize glutton for punishment. The mighty blows of Whipper Nelson appeared to leave no aftereffect upon him. Whirlwind was unmarked, and as fresh and strong as when the first blow had landed.

"I ain't struck a bimbo like him in all my experience," Timmie Quigley assured Whipper between rounds.

"Bimbo?" Whipper croaked, his chest heaving from the effort of his own punches. "Thimmie, he ith an umbrella! Put him up and down, down and up, and he don't thow a wrinkle!"

Whirlwind Pont charged forth at the next bell, his face savage with determination. His bullet head collided with Whipper's right fist before the round had gone ten seconds.

The force of the blow spun him around sidewise, and Whipper, angered at his own ineffectuality, measured Pont carefully. With every ounce of his strength, weight, and timing, he drove his famous right cross home.

Whirlwind shook in every fiber. His

arms dangled ludicrously, his knees assumed parenthetical attitude, wobbled a moment, then disappeared under him as his vast carcass collapsed. He sprawled there a moment, his eyes gazing fondly into each other, and a vacuous smile wreathing his lips. Then his arms stiffened, he discovered his limbs, and struggled upward again into a patient plodding after Whipper.

For the first time in his life Whipper Nelson had sent home his hardest blow to a man who shed the punch. The veteran slid along the ropes in disgust. There was, he felt, no percentage in hitting Whirlwind Pont. The man was not human.

### VIII

AFTER all, Whipper reasoned, what sense was there in endangering his hands and exhausting himself just to knock this man out? There obviously was none. By special arrangement, Whirlwind Pont was due to dive in the next round.

So he boxed Whirlwind for the rest of that round, and the cessation of extreme hostilities gave him opportunity to discover that his gloves already weighed heavily on his hands. He was very glad that Timmie had been thoughtful enough to say the third round rather than a later one.

But what a fool this Pont was! After a blinding punch such as Whipper had landed, why had not the man stayed down and saved everyone effort and trouble? The crowd had seen the punch; and had shrieked appreciation of it.

All the time, Whirlwind Pont appeared to be trying. His great fists gyrated in a continuous effort, but dodging them was as easy as avoiding a pendulum. Whipper Nelson had only to measure their regularity and step in and out as they passed.

Whipper welcomed the bell when it came. He was frankly tired, and, at his age, recuperative power is not what it once was.

"Ain't he the prithe thap?" he asked Timmie as the latter slid the chair under him.

"Much sap," Timmie avowed, spilling a spongeful of water over Whipper's neck; "very much sap." Then he glanced across the ring and received a nod of assurance from Dixie Nixon, who was working on the Whirlwind's leg muscles with his able fingers.

"Will he fold in the nexth round, Thim-

mie?" Nelson whispered anxiously. "Hith head ith like thement!"

"Dixie is telling him the works right now," Timmie replied. "Cleave him with that right again, Whipper. Dust it over his whiskers right after the bell. He'll go down and take his cue to stay there from Dixie."

"I hope tho," Whipper muttered, "but, thomehow, I lack faith in thith guy ath a playmate!"

Timmie slapped Whipper's shoulder resoundingly to send him out for the next bell. Here was the fateful round; the zero hour.

Whipper stuck a straight left onto Whirlwind's nose, and followed it with a right cross that crashed under Pont's chin. Whirlwind folded again, the same grotesque flapping of his arms and legs accompanying the fall.

Whipper stepped back and waited hopefully. The referee hesitated an instant as if he, too, was certain that Whirlwind would get right up.

The crowd had finally tired of the slaughter. In some quarters there were cries of "Stop it!" Others of the spectators shouted encouragement to the wallowing Whirlwind.

The referee's judgment proved correct. Pont got up, the same willing smile on his face, the same plodding forward march characterizing his movements.

Whipper Nelson gave ground before him. There was a corrugation of worry across his receding brow and a black suspicion growing in his mind.

He knew that he was tired, and that, unless Pont stayed down soon, he would be forced onto the defensive himself. Sheer exhaustion might claim him, and he shuddered to think of the long route ahead to the final bell of this bout.

Something, he felt, had gone wrong. Some one was being double crossed, and it occurred to him that it might easily be himself. With that terrible thought in mind, Whipper Nelson looked at Timmie Quigley and detected upon the face of his dapper manager some of the concern which burned within his own brain.

He slipped away from the plodding Pont and glanced at Dixie Nixon. There again he found proof of the honesty of the two executives. Dixie was not only worried, but nonplused and frightened, and it showed very clearly in his face. Could it

be that Whirlwind Pont himself was the crosser?

Whipper determined to learn the worst. Pont was coming after him, his beetling brows drawn together across the bridge of his nose in an effort to look menacing. Whipper slipped inside his guard and brought a right uppercut to Pont's chin. Whirlwind fell again, but arose instantly. Here was proof!

Whipper worked into a clinch after that. There was only one thing to do now; one chance that Pont might be playing fairly, but was forgetful or heedless of the offered opportunity.

Nelson would forget the laugh of ridicule that might follow his lipping words. He would speak to Pont. In the clinch he worked his face close under Whirlwind's chin and muttered:

"Thith ith the third round, you thap! Ain't you going to thand by your promith?"

## IX

THE words were both plea and demand. They bespoke the concern the tired Whipper felt over the ache in his hands, the gift of all those knockdowns.

They might have elicited a fitting response from an ordinary man. But Whirlwind Pont was otherwise.

The response that he made was a madened attempt to murder Whipper on the spot. His eyes grew red with hate, and his face was distorted with rage.

Pont, the punching bag, had turned berserk and found his highest expression in the might of his fists. He pounded and flayed, battered and beat, plodded and pounded, in an insane desire to kill.

He lashed at Whipper's body, pummeled at his head, and beat upon his aching arms until the gloves that adorned Whipper's fists weighed tons. Whirlwind was a man gone mad with the lust to hammer and batter and rend.

Whipper gave ground because he had to. He was fighting with his back to the wall. With all his strength he hit Pont, and the Whirlwind fell, but always he leaped again to his feet and continued the onslaught.

Whipper's breath was stifled by the attack. He sent pleading glances toward Timmie as if beseeching outside influence so that this irresistible tide might be stemmed. But Timmie was mute, his brown eyes burning with a strange light.

Whipper glanced next at Dixie Nixon, and saw the man waving his arms ineffectually at Whirlwind, and gnashing his teeth at the lack of response.

Suddenly, for the first time during the fight, Whirlwind Pont landed a blow. His fist was like a rock, and muscles behind it might have been steel.

Whipper staggered back. The roar of the throng about the ring might have been the boom of a near-by surf, so badly did his ears ring.

Some one close at hand bellowed to Pont to follow up his blow. Here was the under dog coming into his own, the vanquished suddenly rising above the ashes of defeat and claiming victory.

Whirlwind followed the advice, and, because Whipper was slightly dazed, he landed still another blow. Whipper fell, and the crowd screamed its delight.

Ring experience rescued Whipper Nelson, whispering to him through the fog that vexed his brain. He remained on one knee while the referee counted.

He glanced at the electric clock which told the time the round had still to go. He was looking at almost certain defeat. There was still a minute and a half to fight, and Pont stood waiting with his maul-like fists swinging and ready.

At the count of nine Whipper arose. Whirlwind was upon him with the same dervishlike tactics.

There was no defense against such an attack except an offensive, which Whipper Nelson was too far gone to manage. He was hurled along the ropes, flayed about the ring, and twisted and wrenched in the clinches until his head spun and his knees sagged.

The air seemed filled with flying gloves. In the very nature of things, one of Whirlwind Pont's fists again found its mark, which was Nelson's chin.

That blow was all that was needed to win. Whipper later confided to friends that the punch drove his head so far back that he saw the mole between his own shoulder blades.

An excited crowd thronged about the ring. They seized Whirlwind Pont and raised him to their shoulders. The police came to the fighter's rescue and drove the fans away so that the victor might go to his dressing room.

A silent Timmie Quigley led an equally mute Whipper Nelson to the latter's room.

"Thomebody thlipped, Thimmie," Whipper suggested when they were alone.

Maledictions came from the lips of his manager. Quigley declared that, if he lived, some one would pay for this crooked outrage. His mind was too dulled by surprise to grasp the angle he sought, but when it did, the double crossers would be run out of the fight game.

Presently Dixie Nixon came to them. His face alone was evidence of his innocence. He was dazed. His chin sagged, and his eyes roved, and he wet his lips constantly in a gesture of helplessness.

# X

WHEN Whipper Nelson was dressed, the three went to Whirlwind Pont's dressing room. At the door Whipper said:

"Thimmie, I will not fight thith guy again. I am all done pathting hith dial. Hitting him ith like thpitting at Niagara Fallth!"

Timmie Quigley took command.

"This bimbo, Pont, is too dumb to cross us, Dixie," he said. "I am after the man higher up. If somebody got behind him and framed us up, that is the somebody I want. Let me do the talking."

They found Whirlwind Pont stretched out on a rubbing table, his bullet head resting on his forearms, his beetling brow buried from sight while a handler rubbed his massive shoulders. Timmie went to him, leaned over, and spoke gently in his gorilla ear.

"Whirlwind," he said, "you made quite a comeback. It was a fine fight to watch. But will you kindly tell me who and what and why—"

Whirlwind cast aside his attendant and sat erect. His great bare legs dangled from the rubbing table, and he propped himself upright with his mighty arms. From his eye the light of the berserk had faded, but at sight of Whipper Nelson it glowed again, and he glared at all concerned.

"Get out!" he snarled.

"Get out, nothing!" Dixie Nixon retorted angrily. "Ain't I your manager? Didn't I bring you along all this way to main bouts in the big town? Didn't you double cross me out of every dime I had in? I'll hire a gunman to rock you to sleep!"

Whirlwind Pont's face took on a pained expression. He was torn between anger and repentance. His right hand tossed a

gesture of despair, his eyes pleaded. He spoke then, and the peculiarity of his voice at once enlightened Mr. Quigley as to the cause of the betting catastrophe.

"I didn't croth you, Dixthie!" Pont swore earnestly. "I wath going through with the thchme until thith big thap tharted imitating me! You know how then-thithith I am about lithping, Dixthie!"

A moan of anguish came from Timmie Quigley. His brown eyes rolled upward, and his hands made a circular motion that showed disassociation between mind and body. At his feet stood Whirlwind's large water bottle.

Timmie stooped, seized the bottle, and crashed it across the top of Whirlwind Pont's bullet head. The heavyweight went flat.

"You've killed him!" Dixie Nixon groaned. "Beat it, quick. He'll croak!"

"I will not!" Whirlwind Pont protested mildly as he struggled erect. "And you

would be ath mad ath I wath, Dixthie, it thomebody imitated you the way that thap did me!"

From a place near the door, Whipper Nelson turned scornfully upon Timmie Quigley, his manager.

"The nexth time you match me up," he growled, "try one of the lionth up at the thoo. I'm done with thet-upths that are thuppothod to be ekthauthted from climbing into the ring."

Whirlwind Pont dropped back onto the rubbing table. Dixie begged a cigarette from Timmie, and the latter slipped an arm around his friend's shoulders.

"It's the same row of tough breaks, Dixie," he said, philosophically. "You knew your fighter was a lisper, and you might have guessed what would happen; but you're not the guessing kind. Still we're pals, after all—and I can hear the rattle of a chain on a restaurant door. Let's go."

#### A BROKEN HABIT

OH, when my love was false to me,  
I thought my heart would break—  
What use the life that I so long  
Lived only for her sake!

A melancholy man, I mourned  
For many a night and day,  
Till on a sudden, lo! I woke,  
One morning, strangely gay.

'Twas with the morning mail it came—  
The thought that set me free:  
That I no more need write to her  
Who wrote no more to me.

How once I used to watch the mail,  
In fevered hope and fear,  
And black the day that did not bring  
A letter from my dear.

But now I read my mail in peace,  
With an unhaunted breast,  
Nor wait the hour when we shall meet—  
And idle all the rest.

Now, with a learned smile, I know  
That all she was to me  
Was just a habit I indulged—  
And called it love, perdie!

A habit broken—not a heart!  
And now I'm free to make  
A habit gay and gossamer—  
And not too hard to break.

Nicholas Breton



# Some Weeds Look Like Flowers

MR. VANE, OF OAKWOOD, DEMONSTRATES HIS INFALLIBLE  
METHOD OF KEEPING A WIFE IN PROPER  
SUBJECTION TO HER HUSBAND

By Reita Lambert

"THE secret is in not letting them get a start," Elbert Vane generally prefaced his favorite metaphor. "Like weeds—if you don't get the first one, it's good-by to your nice garden; and if a woman once gets the drop on you, you're in for it!"

Smoothly put, and a shrewd bit of reasoning, the value of which lay in the fact that its projector had proved its efficacy through fifteen years of marital wear and tear. Therefore, when Bert Vane waxed eloquent on the conjugal state, his audience evinced neither scorn nor ridicule. Rather, they heard him with awe, envy, admiration, or resentment, according to their individual domestic status.

Fifteen years before, and on the eve of his marriage to little Sally Temple, Bert had been harried into boasting rashly:

"I'd like to see the woman who could boss me!"

Crude, of course—crude as youth! Bert no longer boasted, for there was no longer any necessity. Besides, the years had taught him that a gentleman does not display his opinions on such matters, like cheap drugs in a shop window. On the other hand, if he has discovered an infallible remedy for a universal ill, he does not withhold first aid from some less fortunate mortal. Occasionally, therefore, Mr. Vane would discourse genially but pithily on "success in matrimony."

The Vanes were residents of Oakwood, one of those exclusive colonies that flourish on the outskirts of New York. Like the majority of his neighbors, Bert was a New

Yorker born and bred. He was a trifle overplump, a trifle overpink, but a mild excess of weight and blood pressure is the natural offspring of contentment; and Bert was that rare being, a contented man. He was what is rarer still, a contented husband; and what is almost as rare as the extinct dodo, a contented suburbanite.

It is true that before his marriage he had shared the scorn of many city men for any green or open spaces outside of books, but most especially for the pruned hedges, the neat little houses, the baby buggies, and the community enthusiasms of the suburbs. However, with the advent of a pair of little Vanes, he had come to see the advantages of a sleeping porch over an apartment house roof.

Practically every family man in Oakwood had arrived at this same conclusion, but by a more arduous route. Oakwood owed its growing popularity to the pushings and proddings of tireless wives. The Vanes were exceptions to this rule; but, then, Sally Vane was an exceptional wife.

Sally Vane had never been known to push or prod. Her most ardent enemy would not accuse her of such a thing. It was evident at a glance that she was incapable of supplying impetus, except in the abstract or romantic sense. As a girl, in the days before the vote, when every second maiden was a street corner orator, either pro or anti, Sally had been a docile, fragile, distractingly pretty little thing—one of those girls whose eyes nourish a man's self-esteem and make him yearn for lurking perils from which to rescue them.

Fifteen years after her marriage to Bert Vane, Sally was still pretty, still fragile, still docile—irritatingly docile, to those of her feminine friends whose ideas of progress lay in the complete subjection of their men.

But they were popular, Sally and Bert. Their home was a pleasant place to pass an idle evening. Domestic serenity reigned there. Guests were never conscious of that undercurrent of dissension so often underlying an urbane domestic surface. An evening spent in the placid tranquillity of the Vane household was likely to wake in the masculine breast a nostalgia for the days when husbands were tyrants and wives were meek.

Not that Bert was a tyrant, exactly; nor did his activities differ notably from those of his neighbors. It was not unusual to meet him at a pink and largely feminine tea, or to discover him occupying a seat at a lecture on "Relative Civilizations" in the high school auditorium; but while most of his masculine friends were there on the leash of wifely insistence, they knew that Bert had come because he wanted to.

The Vanes had been in Oakwood for ten years or so when what Bert called the European fever broke out.

Mrs. Seabrook started it. Mrs. Seabrook discovered Europe, quite suddenly, and decided to investigate it. She told her husband so; but Mr. Seabrook was less interested in Europe than he was in currycombs—and Mr. Seabrook was in the automobile business. He vigorously declined to let his business go to the dogs while he went traipsing off to Europe. He said that America was good enough for him, and that he knew several better ways of throwing away his good dollars; and then the Seabrooks sailed for Europe. The Coles speedily followed them, and the Harry Mannings took the next boat after that.

It was a very active and insidious germ. It penetrated the Vanes' living room one autumn evening when Tod Farraday and his wife had come over for a few rubbers of bridge. Ellen Farraday was one of those women who believed that the dummy hand was introduced for conversational purposes. The first time she had to lay down her cards, she said:

"Did you know that Tod and I are thinking of taking that Mediterranean trip in January?"

No later than that afternoon, at the

ninth tee, and in the presence of Bert Vane, Tod Farraday had defied the fate that threatened him.

"Watch me!" he had advised loudly. "Watch me go gallivanting off to Europe and learning to *parley-voo* at my age!"

The memory of that moment was sentimentally alive in Bert's eyes, but Tod kept his own on his cards.

"Really, Ellen?" Sally Vane cried gladly. "How splendid!"

"Yes," Mrs. Farraday said complacently. "It's going to be a wonderful trip, I think. As I told Tod, there's nothing like travel to broaden you out."

This brought Tod to the front. He grinned feebly.

"Yep—guess I'm in for it. The missus has her mind made up."

"And yours, too, eh?" Bert chuckled.

"I expect you'll have a wonderful time," Sally broke in tactfully.

"Why not come along?" suggested Mrs. Farraday. "It's the *best* itinerary, and everybody says the ship is a marvel. The Bathsheba, she is called. Let's make a party of it!"

"That would be lovely," Sally agreed.

"You could leave your children with your mother," Ellen suggested. "That's what we're going to do."

"Nothing doing!" observed Bert, with the pleasant but grim finality that characterized him. "I bid a spade."

Later, Mrs. Tod remarked feelingly to her husband:

"The big brute! I bet Sally's dying to go, too."

And at precisely the same moment, Bert was asking his wife:

"What do you think of that poor worm, letting his wife pull him around by the nose like that?"

Sally was on the verge of inquiring whether worms had noses, but Bert didn't care for humor in wives, and so she ventured instead:

"He'll probably get a lot out of it."

"He could get a new car—a Harrow, at that—for the price of that trip."

"That's true," Sally agreed thoughtfully, and went upstairs to tuck in the children and put out her husband's slippers and nightie.

## II

THE epidemic assumed malignant proportions. Those who had not migrated

Europeward during the summer, were deep in plans for the Mediterranean trip. Lurid pamphlets and the newest Baedeker supplanted the latest best-seller. A French class was organized, and ladies doing their morning marketing greeted one another in halting Italian.

In contrast to the blithe and busy importance of their wives, there was a noticeable depression on the part of the husbands slated for the trip. This amused Bert, and added to his serenity.

"Like sheep, that's what they are," he told Sally. "They want to take that trip just about as much as I do—and yet they're going!"

"I know," replied Sally, sewing busily. Bert liked to see a woman sew of an evening. "I shouldn't think," she added thoughtfully, "that they'd enjoy making a man go against his will."

"If the men had proper insides, they'd put their foot down!"

"Oh, the Flemings are back, you know—landed yesterday."

"Well, and what have they got to show for their good money?" Bert demanded.

"I expect it did cost a lot," Sally hazarded, and bit a thread. "Mrs. Fleming told me—I met her this afternoon at the club—that the Dudennys were on the ship they came home on. You've heard of him—that rich steel man. Mrs. Fleming said that Mr. Dudenny and her husband got to be great friends, and made some kind of a business deal. She said they met a lot of influential people. She said you always do, traveling."

"Expensive way to meet 'em, I'd say!"

"Yes, and I should think you'd be just as likely to meet the other kind—just plain riffraff."

"Business would come high if a man had to go to Europe every time he wanted a new customer!" Bert maintained scathingly. "Wouldn't it?"

"I should think so," Sally agreed, her voice reflecting his scorn. "Oh, Bert dear, I meant to tell you."

He knew that timid, little-girl voice. Sally had done something naughty. He warmed to good-natured tolerance.

"Out with it! What's her done—broken her dolly?"

"No—the car," Sally confessed, her cheeks rosy. "This afternoon—I must have taken too short a turn, coming into the driveway. I dented the fender and

running board pretty badly. Oh, dear, I'm so sorry!"

"Love o' Pete!"

"I know. It was stupid of me." Guilt was becoming to Sally. "It looks pretty bad—and it looked badly enough before, didn't it?"

"Hey?" Bert ejaculated, surprised.

"I mean old," Sally explained, swiftly, apologetically.

Bert had not thought of the car as old. They had had it less than a year.

"Old!" he echoed.

She came and put her arms about him.

"I'm so sorry, Bert—and I don't know when we can spare it to have it fixed. I've got to have it almost every minute for the next few days. It'll serve me right if it does look funny."

"Guess it will," Bert said, but he was not really angry.

After all, as Bert's creed had it, running a car was primarily a man's job. A man who held this view could get a certain satisfaction out of a woman's incompetence; so, instead of scolding her, he teased her a good deal, and while she diminished with chagrin, he expanded with his own fine magnanimity.

On the train to town, next morning, he recounted the incident to Ladd Haworth.

"Poor little beggar!" he mused. "She does her best; but a woman and a car—well, you know!"

Mr. Haworth nodded, and said somewhat absently:

"Funny! I've heard Kate say your wife knew more about a car than any other woman in Oakwood—had the coolest head."

But this took the edge off Bert's story.

"Nonsense!" he grunted impatiently. "No woman knows how to run a car—properly."

He would have elaborated his thesis if his companion had not asked abruptly, morosely:

"You going on that Mediterranean trip the Farradays are taking?"

"Certainly not," Bert told him decisively. "Are you?"

"Shouldn't be surprised."

"What do I want to go to Europe for?" Bert inquired, genially.

"Why," explained Mr. Haworth, with the gentlest tolerance, "to see Mme. du Barry's toothbrush, and the comb Marie Antoinette combed her hair with, and Louis

the Quince's nightie. Where's your artistic perception?"

"Where's your own?"

"My wife's got it," Mr. Haworth said, softly. "She's getting it all washed and darned up for our little jaunt across the big ocean."

"Why do you go, if you feel that way about it?"

Mr. Haworth studied his friend for a moment before he replied.

"Well," he said, "I've done a little figuring, and in the long run I find it 'll be cheaper than alimony."

Retailing the conversation that evening to Sally, Bert's account did not spare his unfortunate friend. Sally was satisfactorily shocked.

"I'm afraid it's just as you said the other day—they're like sheep. You see everybody's going—everybody who can afford it. This afternoon, at the club, it was terrible. I almost cried."

"You almost—what on earth—"

"Mary Fordyce gave a tea for Mrs. Cole—she's just back, you know. She and Joy Dunlap and her sister Betty were at my table, and all they talked about was their trip—how wonderful it was, and how many prominent people they'd met, and all sorts of interesting things. I couldn't help but feel that Mary Fordyce had put me with them just to m-make me f-feel cheap!"

"The devil! Cheap!"

"Well, I've never been to Europe, of course." Sally came over to Bert's chair, to cuddle down beside him. "I was so angry and—and nervous that I just couldn't think, and coming home—oh, Bert!"

"There, now! What's the trouble?"

"Well, I almost ran into another car."

"Good Lord!"

"I know. I stopped just in time, but I'm afraid I've damaged the old car again. Something rattles dreadfully inside. I almost got killed."

"You poor baby!"

"I'm so glad I didn't have the children with me—just think!"

"Poor, brave child!"

"Poor old car, too!" and Sally grinned through her tears.

Bert now saw the car as hopelessly ancient, a battered coffee mill, a menace to his family. Besides, he had heard its rattle and seen its dents.

"You should have heard the girls laugh at my dented fenders," Sally said, whimsically. "I suppose they'll think we can't afford to buy a new car, just as they think we can't afford to go to Europe."

"Hey? So that's what they think, is it?"

"Well, that's what Mrs. Cole said—not about us, I don't mean; but she said anybody who cared anything about culture, and could afford it, would go. Oh, I was mad!"

"Look here!" Bert said, after a moment. "Tell you what—we need a new car. It's time we junked the old boat. Suppose we give ourselves a blow, eh?"

"Oh, Bert! Really? You darling! A Harrow—oh, Bert, how marvelous! A Harrow lasts for a lifetime, they say—and I'll be so careful!"

Bert hadn't considered buying a Harrow. Pretty steep, a Harrow! Still, as Sally had happened to mention, it was a car that would last for years, and it would be too bad to cloud that bright eagerness on her pretty little face.

"Well, we'll go to town one day soon and look 'em over," he finally conceded, indulgently.

Sally hugged him tempestuously. She was, Bert saw fondly, just a kid yet, for all her thirty-five years—just a kid who'd had her feelings hurt by a bunch of jealous females. Some days later they went to town and looked over the Harrow models, but Sally couldn't decide which she liked best, and they postponed buying.

### III

AND then, one evening, the Seabrooks called unexpectedly, and only a few minutes later the Harry Mannings came in.

The Seabrooks had never called on the Vanes before, nor the Vanes on the Seabrooks. The Seabrooks, in fact, had never penetrated the small inner circle of Oak-wood society. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Seabrook was built for action in small circles, any more than a sea lion is built for gamboling in a goldfish bowl; but Sally had told Bert that since their return from Europe they were being received everywhere. Certainly their enthusiastic reception from the Mannings bore this out. The Mannings were the inner circle of Oak-wood society, so to speak.

Sally, facing what might have been one of those social *impasses* so trying for a



hostess, was delighted with the good fellowship of her visitors. Since they were two too many for bridge, they had to fall back on conversation. Sally's book of "Rules for the Perfect Hostess" said:

Find out what your guests want to talk about, and cue them.

As it happened, all four of her guests were recently back from Europe. She started the ball rolling when she produced, with that prompt efficiency of hers, a sweating pitcher of lemonade.

"I suppose," she said sweetly to Mr. Seabrook, "you're used to something a little better than this."

Now, Mr. Seabrook's figure was tiered and turreted by his devotion to the gustatory art. His mind was like a salesman's map, pinked by the memory of luscious repasts.

"Well," he confessed, sipping not lemonade, but a splendid memory, "we've just come from the land of popping corks, you know. Remember that champagne we had at Rheims, Cora?"

"Yes," replied Cora; "but when it comes to champagne, I must say that brand they had on the boat was good enough for me. You know, Mrs. Vane"—she turned to her hostess—"I've found that it's just plain silly to be seasick. The minute the ship begins to roll, just send the steward for a split of champagne—and, my dear! Only thirty francs—think of it, scarcely a dollar!"

"I think," Mrs. Manning put in firmly, "that taking your meals on deck helps as much as anything."

"Think of it!" Mr. Seabrook mused dreamily. "Thirty francs—or was it thirty-five? Anyway—"

"Well, I never skipped a meal in the dining room," Harry Manning announced complacently.

"Thirty francs, that was it," Mr. Seabrook decided, and sighed.

"Personally, I never *had* such an appetite," Mrs. Seabrook boasted. "The sea air, I suppose. I only wish I could fix duck like that *chef*—"

"Couldn't touch Frédéric's duck—you remember Frédéric's place, Manning?" pressed Mr. Seabrook anxiously.

"Do we?" Mrs. Manning cried delightedly. "I'll say we do!"

"Why, one night in Paris—"

"Now there's a place, Vane!" Mr. Sea-

brook told Bert. "There's a man *knows* duck. How he makes it taste like that—"

"It's an art," Harry Manning averred, emphatically. "Now take that lark pie they serve at the Cock Tavern in London—"

"Sally dear, you ought to *see* that Cock Tavern!"

"Some place!" Mr. Seabrook breathed. "Talk about your old port, and as for cheese—"

"Tennyson's chair and his old churchwarden pipe," persisted Mrs. Manning. "I don't know but what I prefer England—"

"Aren't the tea shops wonderful?" demanded Mrs. Seabrook. "I wonder if you and Mr. Manning happened to go into that place on Hampstead Heath—but then I don't know. Not many tourists find it. An Englishman told us about it—a Mr. Dryden."

"Say, Vane, there was a gentleman! A descendant of *the* Dryden, he was, too. He'd been over here on business, and Cora and I struck up an acquaintance with him on the way over. He had us down to his place in Kent—one of these regular English manors you hear about."

"The loveliest place!" rejoiced Mrs. Seabrook.

"All this talk about the cold formality of the English is just bosh," Mr. Seabrook declared.

"Still, they *are* particular," Mrs. Seabrook reminded him. "I've always heard it's next to impossible to be invited to an Englishman's home."

"We met the most delightful French couple at Malmaison," Mrs. Manning put in brightly. "They took us through the gardens of their estate."

"Speaking of Malmaison," Mr. Seabrook said, "I wonder if you know that café there, just at the entrance to the *château*."

"Sure—the Chapon Fin—that it?"

"That means the café of the fine chicken," Mrs. Manning translated kindly for Sally. "Isn't it quaint?"

"Don't know anything about their chicken, but I'll bet they serve the best *filet* in France," declared Mr. Seabrook.

"Speaking of *filet*," Mrs. Manning said, "you should have seen Harry the day the waiter dropped the steak in his lap. That was on the trip home, and we ran into a squall up there near Ireland or somewhere."

"Just *made* the trip, that squall," Harry Manning told them. "You can't be stand-offish with a steak in your pocket and soup in your hair. That squall loosened everybody up right off the bat—"

"Just what I've said to Cora," Mr. Seabrook interrupted heartily. "Nothing like sharing a common danger to bring folks together. Now we had the same experience coming back. A little old storm rolled up, the passengers rolled together—say, first thing you knew we were all in the smoker singing, 'Yes, We Have No Bananas'—"

"The funniest thing!" Mrs. Seabrook recalled.

"And there," her husband continued, "right beside me was old Tom Vanster—you know, the coal millionaire—Cora and I are going to spend next week-end with 'em, by the way. Well, there he was, singing as loud as any of 'em. Great old boy!"

"Mr. Seabrook and Mr. Vanster were chosen to judge the fancy dress ball," Mr. Seabrook's wife announced, modestly.

"By gosh, I was let in for that, too!" Harry Manning confessed, with the nonchalance men assume in moments of triumph. "The captain asked me himself, so what could I do?"

"Wasn't that captain a dear?" reminisced Mrs. Manning.

"No cinch, judging an affair like that," Mr. Seabrook continued, and chuckled. "Vanster and I hit on a good scheme—all the pretty women who didn't get prizes, we danced with."

"Cue your guests," said Sally's "Perfect Hostess" book. Sally was an excellent hostess, and one cue had spread over an entire evening. Only her nicely timed exclamations of interest and admiration would have been required to spread it over a solid week. Neither Mr. Seabrook nor Harry Manning had wanted to go to Europe; but, having gone, they had awakened to the realization that they had acquired a new code—the secret, fascinating code of the traveler.

Nothing is more certain to arouse a man's inferiority complex than to force him to listen, with every appearance of understanding and animation, to a conversation carried on in some language of which he is ignorant—nothing, that is, unless some malignant chance should expose him to a rehearsal of reminiscences in which he has no part.

At the end of half an hour, Bert Vane realized that he was being borne along on the tide of his guests' retrospection for the sole purpose of supplying an audience. Nature had not designed him to serve gracefully in that capacity. He had assiduously sidestepped all such performances as denied him a leading rôle. To serve in a lesser capacity injured his pride and aroused his resentment—a resentment not entirely unwarranted, for it began to appear, as his guests warmed to their subject, that Europe had produced her secret treasures for their sole edification and enjoyment, and had put them under lock and key immediately afterward.

Indeed, Mr. Seabrook, politely stimulated by his hostess, admitted that few Americans had "gotten as much out of Europe" as Mrs. Seabrook and himself. Harry Manning was of the opinion that the average tourist traveled with his eyes shut. Later it developed that only an innate democracy had moved Mr. and Mrs. Seabrook to decline places next to the captain of their steamer, while Mr. Manning modestly remarked that lack of time had caused him to forego luncheon with Mussolini. Then the lady travelers discoursed on their Paris wardrobes, and there was a busy exchange of prices and addresses.

When the front door shut them out at last, Sally turned to her husband, her eyes wide with contrition and sympathy.

"Dear, I thought they'd never go. I know you must be terribly tired and bored!"

"Of all," Bert said thickly, "the insufferable asses and egotists—"

"Impossible!" Sally agreed emphatically. "Quite impossible!"

"To hear them, you'd think no one had ever been abroad before!"

"Wouldn't you?" cried Sally, wrathfully. "As if *any one* couldn't go! As if it wasn't as easy as—going to town—almost! They're insufferable!"

"Of all the bragging, pompous—"

"I don't believe it, do you? I mean about that fat Mr. Seabrook getting intimate with a man like Mr. Vanster, and being chosen to judge at the fancy dress ball."

"Must have been mighty short of judges, I'd say!"

"The idea! As if *he'd* be asked to sit next to the captain!"

"Good man to have if the captain hap-

pened to be on a diet," Bert said, and laughed richly.

"I don't believe that about the Englishman at all. Why, no Englishman, on such short acquaintance, would ask an American into his home!"

"I'd like to know why not!" Bert declared belligerently. "I guess if he happened to be a gentleman—"

Sally undressed to the accompaniment of derisive mumbblings:

"And those Mannings, too! Lording it over us! Bragging like that!"

"Who lorded it over—"

"Well, they *did*! He as much as said we'd never get to see what they saw. Why, that trip the Farradays are taking—they've got a splendid itinerary—they're going places no one has *ever* been. The Bathsheba is a better ship, too. And the idea of his saying the captain asked him—why, I've always heard it's only the most prominent men on the ship that are asked to judge those dances. It's considered a great compliment."

The lights out at last, Bert found sleep barricaded by spiky animosity. The newly acquired urbanity of the lumpish Seabrook irked him oddly. The vision of Seabrook puffily inspecting the kennels of the hospitable Englishman, and condescendingly dispensing prizes and dances to pretty lady passengers in joint jocularly with the wealthy Mr. Vanster—these were thoughts not conducive to sleep. There were others, sticking there in Bert's mind like flies on fly paper, buzzing madly—buzzing a challenge, a taunt.

Quite suddenly, quite terribly, Bert realized that he wanted to go to Europe, too. He wanted to taste that champagne at thirty francs a split—or was it thirty-five? He wanted to be chosen a judge at the fancy dress ball; to refuse—or accept, perhaps—a seat at the captain's table; to tap England for a baronet and France for a count—or two, perhaps; to discover "unbeaten paths" closed to all but the resourceful and wary, and to brag about his wife's Paris wardrobe. Why, love of Pete, what was a trip to Europe? Did these braggarts think they had a corner on the place?

And then, like a cloud passing over his lovely sun, Bert remembered the Harrow. He had promised Sally the Harrow, and for the same amount of money—

"Oh, Bert, dear!" It was Sally's voice,

coming sleepily out of the darkness. "I meant to tell you, but with those people coming, and all, it slipped my mind. I took the car up to the garage to-day and asked Charlie about it, and he says it's really not badly damaged at all. He says it would be silly to get a new one—they can fix it up like new, and it won't cost much either. I wanted to tell you, dear. We *can* wait a year or so, can't we?"

#### IV

NEXT day, at the noon hour, Bert Vane left his office and walked purposefully down Broadway toward the steamship offices. Lucky he had remembered the name of the ship for that Mediterranean trip! The Bathsheba, she was called. For a moment he had considered an independent trip, but, after all, it was his first—but not last, certainly—venture into foreign lands; and anyhow, a party was jollier.

He had thought, too, momentarily, of taking Sally into his confidence, before he decided to make it a surprise. There was a possibility, of course, that she wouldn't care to go; but when had she ever opposed his wishes?

And Bert liked to surprise Sally. He had done so innumerable times, and they all made pleasant memories.

There was the time when he had decided to buy in Oakwood, for instance. Sally had been convinced that the place was too select for them, fearful that they would not be received in the best circles, and that Bert might find the Country Club closed to him. This, naturally, had nettled Bert, and he had proved her wrong. She had owned as much. She had always done that, indeed, and that was because he had been firm and she reasonable—which was proper. Once he had the tickets for this trip bought and paid for, she would see that it was for their own cultural advantage that they should go.

He was musing contentedly on these matters when he became conscious of a large figure in his path, and of a large, jovial voice calling his name.

"Here's the old lad now!" boomed the traveled Mr. Seabrook. "By gosh, I was just talking about you and that sweet little wife of yours, and what a great old pow-wow we had at your place last night. I was just telling young Greeley that Cora was tickled pink when your missus called up and asked us over—and no wonder!

She's a rare little woman, and you're a lucky fellow. Didn't I just say that, Greeley? You see, Greeley, here, has gone and got himself engaged, and I was telling him he ought to get the low down on this marriage business from you."

"Yes, Mr. Seabrook says," young Greeley murmured redly, "that you've got a bunch of secrets up your sleeve—"

"Only one, young man," Bert corrected placidly, even while he writhed at the boastful Seabrook's attempt to make an impression on this boy at the cost of a lie. Sally ask them over, indeed! Why, she had been as much surprised at their appearance as Bert had been. "Only one," he repeated, kindly. "Just don't let them get the drop on you once. Like weeds—if you don't nip the first one, your garden's done for. Same way with a woman, if she gets her own way once—like weeds, you know!"

And then young Greeley said a very clever thing, a thing that proved he would go far in his chosen profession, whatever that profession might be.

"But they're clever—women," he said; "and some weeds look like flowers."

The older men laughed at this, but secretly Bert didn't think it funny. He was humming a little tune, however, when he turned into the steamship office. Briefly and clearly he stated his wants to the dapper, smiling young man at the first-class counter; but the young man's smile faded as Bert talked.

"The Bathsheba! Well, now, I'm sorry, but she's full up. You see, it has

proved a most popular trip. I'm mighty sorry."

With frustration, Bert's desire became necessity. He was indignant, reproachful.

"Well, suppose you leave me your name and address," the young man suggested, finally. "There's always a possibility that some of the reservations may not be taken up at the last minute. Leave your name."

Bert's name had never received so cordial a reception. The sound of it quite transformed the dapper young man.

"Why, Mr. Vane—Elbert Vane, isn't it?—of Oakwood," he echoed gladly. "I beg your pardon. If you'd mentioned it in the beginning!" Joyfully he pawed the leaves of a large book and produced a plan.

"Let me see—I understood Mrs. Vane to say that *she'd* come in, when I talked with her last week. Here we are! Deck B, you see—best location on the ship, if you ask me. The baths are near by, you'll notice—Mrs. Vane was particular about that. She paid down. I'll have to get my data—excuse me. You'll be wanting some cabin and hold tags, too. Here, boy! One minute, Mr. Vane, please!"

But it was more than a moment before he came back for Bert's check, with tickets and tags nicely packeted.

"Here we are, Mr. Vane! Thank you, sir—I beg your pardon. Now what do you know about that?" demanded the dapper young man of a fellow clerk, as they watched Bert's retreating figure. "'Some weeds look like flowers'—that's what he said. What do you suppose he meant by that?"

### THE PASSING YEAR

I HEARD the prattle of the baby Spring,  
And in the forest's deeps saw hints of her,  
In every fragrant capped and hooded thing;  
And cobweb swaddlings of white gossamer.

I saw the coming of the Summer Queen;  
I saw her diadem of sparkling dew;  
Her gown of roses' petals piped with green;  
The daisy buckles on each dainty shoe.

I saw the Mother Autumn's tireless hands  
Weave day by day a wondrous tapestry  
Of falling leaves; while over all the lands  
Sounded the wild wind's changeful minstrelsy.

I saw old Father Winter, falt'ring, slow—  
His hoary head hung low upon his breast—  
Bring forth a coverlet of downy snow  
To wrap all Nature into dreamful rest.

Elizabeth M. Montague



# The Sport of Kings

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—TO SEE THIS NAÏVE COMMONER  
PLAYING THE RACES, A STRANGER WOULD SUSPECT  
THAT HE WAS A PRINCE OF THE GAMBLING  
DYNASTY IN DISGUISE

By Scammon Lockwood

**W**HENEVER I think of Sidney Waterman, I think of him as I first saw him and as I last saw him. The dramatic events that soon followed our first meeting are cast into a shadow by the brighter glow of those two encounters. They seem to meet in my mind, and to close a circuit of fabulous kilowatts, casting an illumination that keeps them more significant even than that feverish day on which Sidney lived through crashing chords of drama, only to close with the tiny grace note of a childish question flung at a deaf, voiceless, and indifferent infinite.

That first meeting with Sidney Waterman, which is always to be the inseparable twin of the last, was brought about by my chum of that particular period, Dave Blelock. Dave was a clerk in a broker's office on the Chicago Board of Trade, while I was a junior bookkeeper in another broker's office. We were discovering life, as life is continually being discovered by young men; and we found it by turns surprising, disconcerting, baffling, delightful.

Dave, a youngster of constantly renewed enthusiasms, was always meeting some perfectly devastating girl, finding a new place to eat in which the essential calories might be obtained for a few cents less than we had been paying, or falling in with some other young man who was a most wonderful fellow. Thus it came about that I heard much of Sidney Waterman before ever I laid eyes on the man. He might almost have been some theatrical star who, in the character he portrays, is discussed and described for the greater part of the first act before he makes his appearance.

I don't know how or where Dave had met Sidney Waterman. I merely remember that Sidney began to get into my chum's conversation during our lunch hour, and during the occasional evenings we spent together. First it was "Waterman says this," and "Waterman does that;" then it was "Sidney" who was quoted and described, and finally it was "Sid." This evolutionary period extended over perhaps two weeks. Then one noon, just as I was putting on my coat, Dave stuck his head into the office where I was employed, and said:

"Come on over, and I'll introduce you to Sidney Waterman."

He said this somewhat in the manner of a Congressman from one of the rural districts saying to a visitor in Washington:

"Come over to the White House, and I'll introduce you to the President."

It was impossible to mistake Dave's manner. He was about to confer a tremendous honor upon me.

I don't know precisely what my anticipations were as we walked down Jackson Boulevard and turned south on Dearborn Street in the direction of the office of the Triangle Engraving Company, where Sidney was employed as a fashion artist. I suppose I must have had in my mind some absurdly romantic idea of an artist's studio.

Perhaps I expected to find Sidney Waterman in a lofty, spacious, paneled apartment, with light falling upon his easel through a tall and austere Gothic window. Perhaps there was a marble floor strewn with costly rugs. Perhaps there were silk or velvet hangings, and even a fountain

murmuring aid to artistic inspiration in soothing cadences. I didn't know but what there might be a string quartet hidden behind a bower of palms eternally rendering the "Humoresque," the "Spring Song," the "Melody in F," and Shubert's "Serenade." I may have suspected that a glossy Nubian in a robe of yellow silk served aromatic coffee and cigarettes to Sidney Waterman, who reclined in languorous ease upon a couch before his easel.

We opened the door, and for a moment I thought we had opened the door of a closet. The room, if you may call it a room, certainly couldn't have been more than eight feet square. It looked as if some one had gone to every counter in a department store, picked up something or other, thrown this heterogeneous mass into a giant dice box, shaken it up, and poured it into this eight-foot cubicle.

In the midst of the litter and confusion, a man was seated in front of an easel. As I came in, I could only see his back. I was stunned by the horrible confusion and disorder of the room. It was the first artist's studio to which I had ever penetrated, and its reality, so different from the creation of my fancy, was a shock.

Nevertheless, here was an artist. This, at least, was a fact. This, at least, was a reality. Yes, here was an artist actually in the throes of creation.

"Hey, there!" said Dave, at my elbow.

The artist straightened up and started to pull a piece of paper over what was on his drawing board. Then, as he turned and realized that it was Dave Blelock, he laughed and said:

"Hello, Dave! Gee, for a minute I thought it was the boss!"

And then I perceived that the creation on which the artist had been laboring was a racing dope sheet. I was shocked. I felt somehow that a racing dope sheet should be beneath the notice of an artist.

Dave introduced me, and it was my immediate privilege to shake Sidney Waterman by the hand; and from that moment I had the spell of his personality cast over me.

I didn't notice particularly, just then, that he was very tall and exceedingly thin—almost emaciated; that he had a great shock of ebony hair and huge coal-black eyes, deep set and glowing; that he had the long, spatulate fingers of the artist, the nervous hand of the artist. Of all these

things I became aware later. For the moment all I knew was that the immediate presence of Sidney Waterman gave me a glow of pleasure.

Young men who are discovering life do not deeply analyze their own emotions. That is for the comparative leisure of age. As well take the astronomy of Laplace, the mathematics of Newton, the chemistry of Mme. Curie, the physics of Oliver Lodge, and the psychology of William James, and attempt to explain why sugar tastes sweet. The instinct of youth in this respect is superior to the wisdom of age. It wastes no time in any such futile analysis. It accepts the sweetness of sugar, but utters no whys or wherefores.

It was a pleasure to meet Sidney Waterman. It was a pleasure to be with him. I am quite sure that I told him that I was pleased to meet him.

"Gosh!" he said. "The boss said that if he caught me over that dope sheet again, he'd can me; but I've got an absolute sure thing in the third race. If I could only raise ten dollars to stick on Tennis Ball, I'd make a killing!"

"What's his price?" said Dave.

"I've got it straight from the inside," said Sidney, "that it's going to be a hundred to one, and a sure winner. Jiggers!"

Waterman turned hastily to his drawing board and covered the dope sheet with a piece of drawing paper. On the latter he had begun to sketch a shirt waist, which was draped over the back of a chair, and which looked as if it was intended to be worn by some frightfully deformed person.

Fashion drawings, at that time, had small relation to reality. They never allowed a woman a waist very much larger than her neck. Models were quite unnecessary to a fashion artist. He merely drew the conventional figure, and upon this he traced a map of the garment. That was why Sidney Waterman could take a shirt-waist, drape it over the back of a chair, and copy the detail in it over the preposterous figure which he had already outlined with his pencil.

This was the sort of work that could be picked up or dropped in an instant, and, therefore, when the door opened, as it almost immediately did, he was the picture of industry.

The man who had opened the door took a step into the room and gave a short and by no means friendly nod to Dave and

myself. He was a little man, with all the pomposity of manner that little men so often assume. He had a sharply retreating chin, or, more correctly, no chin at all—a deficiency which he attempted to conceal by wearing a stiff goatee. His eye had the color and expression of a small oyster on the half shell.

He wore no coat, his vest was unbuttoned, and the cuffs of his shirt were rolled back from very large and exceedingly hairy hands. He looked like one of those men who continually and unreflectingly go toward their objective until they bring up against the dead wall of something utterly beyond their comprehension.

He regarded Sidney for a moment, satisfied himself that the artist was busy upon the affairs of the Triangle Engraving Company, and then said:

"Forget about lunch until you got a pencil sketch of that shirt waist for Mandel Brothers. All morning they holler for it like they never sold nothing but shirt waists, and would maybe make an assignment if they don't get that drawing in to-morrow's paper."

"All right," agreed Sidney, rapidly sketching in the detail.

"How much more time on it?" said the head of the Triangle Engraving Company.

Sidney threw back his head, cocked it to one side, closed one eye, posed as the picture of careful calculation, and replied:

"Oh, about twenty-five minutes."

"Twenty minutes is enough to give them a pencil sketch," said the Triangle Engraving Company quite positively, at the same time again regarding Dave and me, this time with a manner which implied that if we cleared out the job might possibly be completed in eighteen minutes.

This we could not ignore.

"See you later, Sid," said Dave, as we started out.

"See if you can't raise ten bucks somewhere," suggested Sidney Waterman, without looking up from the drawing board.

"I don't come up here very often," observed Dave, as we stood in the hall waiting for the elevator. "They don't like to have Sid disturbed in his work. They think it distracts him."

"Yes," I replied. "Have to be mighty careful about an artist."

"Isn't he a great guy?" said Dave. "You know he took the first prize in drawing at the Nettlehorst School. They

started him in here right after he graduated, and paid him eighteen dollars a week just to start. What do you think of that?"

"Pretty good."

"Inside of six months they raised him to twenty. He's getting twenty-five now, and they've promised him thirty before very long."

"He must have a great future," I said enviously.

"Future!" exclaimed Dave. "Why, they say it won't be more than a few years before he makes ten thousand a year, if he works hard."

"Who wouldn't, with a chance like that?" I replied.

"He isn't only a good commercial artist," said Dave; "he's a hot sport. He goes to the races, knows the dope on all the horses, knows a lot of the big racing men, and there isn't a month passes that he doesn't take his girl to a show."

"Doesn't he take her to the races?" I said.

Dave shook his head.

"No, she's sore on the races. Her folks are kind of religious. She says betting on the races is wrong, because you always lose."

## II

My next meeting with Sidney Waterman afforded a better opportunity really to make his acquaintance.

Dave Blelock and I were members of Troop G, Second Illinois Cavalry, a National Guard organization. We drilled once a week in an old riding academy over on the North Side. The following drill night, just as I was getting out of my uniform, Dave called across the room to me:

"Hey, Ed, wait for me downstairs. Sidney Waterman's here."

"All right," I replied, as I tugged at a stiff new boot that was never to be any too loose. "Be with you in a minute."

I got out of my uniform and into my civilian garb, and went downstairs to the visitors' gallery. Here was Sidney Waterman with a girl who literally "knocked your eye out," as we young men of that day were in the habit of saying of any girl who was under twenty-five, and who would not actually stop a freight train. We were gallant in those days, and nearly all girls were beautiful, and were to be treated as something infinitely fragile. They came to admire us, not to copy us. We did the

riding, and they loved us for the perils through which we passed; and we loved them because they thought we were so wonderful.

The girl with Sidney Waterman was undoubtedly pretty, judged even by sterner standards than ours. I have since fully satisfied myself on this point. Her name was Cornelia Van Buskirk.

And yet, despite the fact that the girl was decidedly arresting, it was Sidney Waterman who drew my attention and aroused my interest. On the previous day, in the little cubby which was called his studio, I had merely got an impression of him. About all I had seen of him was his eyes, great, coal-black, animated ovals of eagerness; but now I was able to note more carefully his perfectly straight black hair, and I consciously observed that he was very tall and very slender. He was dressed in a double-breasted suit of blue serge that was very skillfully made, and that must have cost much more than either Dave or I could possibly pay for our suits.

"Well," he said, after I had been introduced to Cornelia, "what's doing?"

"How about a soda?" I timidly suggested, but I immediately realized that I had made a social error.

There was an awkward pause, and then Sidney Waterman replied:

"Connie has to have her chop suey about this time."

Then I realized the extent of my error. To suggest the vapidity of soda water to those who partook of chop suey, the ambrosia of romance, was inappropriate, to say the least. In those days it was considered quite the most daring and devilish of all things to go to a Chinese restaurant and eat chop suey. Only a few hardy spirits had dared the perils of the mad adventure; but they, returning seemingly unharmed, were encouraging more timid souls by assuring them that there was no rat meat in chop suey, and that the Chinamen would let you go into their kitchen and see them making the stuff.

At that remote period there was just one Chinese restaurant in all Chicago, and thither Sidney Waterman, Cornelia Van Buskirk, Dave, and I betook ourselves.

It was one of those evenings which inspired some one, once upon a time, to say that Chicago was the greatest summer resort in the world. There was a delightfully cool breeze from the lake, the air was

clear and refreshing, the moon and the stars were clean-cut in the deep blue of the evening sky. We boarded a Clark Street cable car, and the four of us were very merry with jokes and conundrums that are just now beginning to be rediscovered by musical comedy librettists.

"Say," said Sidney to the conductor, as he paid our fares in very much the grand manner, "do you know why they don't charge policemen on these cars?"

The conductor was good-natured and accommodating.

"I'll bite," he said.

"Because you can't get a nickel out of a copper," said Sidney.

We all roared. I turned to Miss Van Buskirk.

"I heard a good one to-day," I said.

"Did you hear about the poor little girl in Madison, Wisconsin, who swallowed her spoon?"

Miss Van Buskirk politely shook her head. She had never heard about the poor child in Madison, Wisconsin, who had swallowed her spoon; but Sidney Waterman had heard all about the unlucky girl, and foiled me.

"Sure," he said, "and now she can't stir."

In such ways Sidney quite unconsciously kept the limelight on himself. Sidney was the leader. Sidney was always the one to show us the way to new adventure—that new adventure which is never new to youth, the opening out of the thing we call life, the ever new discovery of a new world.

Yet, on this ride Sidney showed one side of his character which has ever since been a puzzle to me. In the midst of his gayety and animation, he suddenly fell silent. An expression of childish wonder came over his face, and then, after a moment of pondering, he turned to us quite seriously and remarked:

"Come to think of it, Columbus was a great man."

"Nobody said anything about Columbus, Sidney," said Cornelia.

Then Sidney was again vivacious and animated, taking the lead and keeping it. Yet, many times afterward, I knew him to drop suddenly into the same momentary trance, and to exclaim at some perfectly natural fact which had all of a sudden risen into his consciousness.

Once, as we were walking along Jack-



son Boulevard, he fell silent for a moment, and then remarked:

"Ain't the horse a meek animal?"

Of course, there was some excuse for this, for Sidney was always thinking about horses; but at that particular moment we had not been discussing them.

A week or two later, when I happened to be seated in his studio watching him finish a sketch, he had been working silently for perhaps three minutes, when he quickly looked up and said:

"Did you ever think that twice two always makes four?"

During the rest of this ride, however, he was the Sidney Waterman who was most usually in evidence—a bold and forward personality, entirely without subtlety.

At the Chinese restaurant we not only partook of chop suey, but we drank champagne. True, it was a domestic champagne, and there was only one bottle for the four of us; but since it was the first time in my life that I had tasted champagne, it was a tremendous event. I was steeped in romance.

I fancied that Sidney Waterman liked me. He deferred to me. He asked my opinion as to whether H. H. Kohlsaats was a better restaurant than E. W. Kohlsaats's. He asked to be allowed to try my brand of cigarettes, decided that they were better than his own, and announced that he was going to smoke them hereafter. Not only had he the manner of the prince, but he had the princely faculty of making you feel that your opinion was of value; that your presence was a pleasure and a privilege.

Of course he paid for the entertainment—paid for it with a five-dollar bill. Yes, and there was change from the five-dollar bill. Imagine! Champagne and chop suey for four, and change from a five-dollar bill!

"Gosh!" said Sidney, as he tipped the waiter. "John, give me a little luck."

The Chinaman ducked his head and smiled, in the fashion of all Chinese waiters. Sidney turned to me and said:

"I've got an absolute cinch in the third race to-morrow, if we only have a dry track."

"You're not going to the races," said Cornelia.

"Now, Connie, cut it out," replied Sidney, playfully. "I'm going to the races, and, what's more, you're coming with me."

"I cannot think of anything more utterly impossible," Miss Van Buskirk told him.

I found it difficult to reconcile this exceedingly Puritan attitude toward the races with Miss Van Buskirk's presence in a place of such pagan revelry as a chop suey restaurant; but I have since learned that only men are puzzled by the inconsistencies of women.

"I've got to raise ten dollars somewhere," said Sidney. "It's Lapis Lazuli in the third race, sixty to one; and I've got inside information that they're going to run her to win for the first time."

"How do you get your tips?" I asked Sidney.

"Oh, I know some of the insiders," he replied, quite grandly. "One of my best pals is a jockey, and I was playing billiards the other night with Benny Caspar, who is one of the biggest bookmakers in the United States. Then there's a fellow in the shipping room of the Triangle Engraving Company who lives next door to one of the jockeys, and he gets the straight dope right from the track."

"I'd rather play the wheat market," I said.

Remember, I was a clerk in a broker's office, and all day I heard nothing but tales of great fortunes that had been made in the pit; but Sidney Waterman shook his head.

"No, you get more action out of the ponies," he said.

"You can make more in the wheat market," I retorted.

"What can you make out of twenty dollars?"

"You might make a thousand dollars," I said.

"Look what you can make on the ponies!" he replied. "Why, if I had a twenty-dollar bill on Lapis Lazuli to-morrow, I'd cash in twelve hundred; and then, if I turned around and played a ten-to-one shot three ways in the fourth, and picked a favorite at five to one in the fifth, and maybe felt a little conservative and didn't bet more than half of what I had on another favorite at even money, or maybe two to one, in the sixth, I could walk out of the betting ring with ten thousand dollars. You can't get any action like that in the wheat market!"

I had to admit that this was true. Somehow or other I was quite sure that Sidney

Waterman could do exactly what he described with the twenty dollars. It never occurred to me that any of the horses he picked could possibly lose. If I had had twenty dollars, I would have loaned it to him without the slightest hesitation.

Miss Van Buskirk, however, was of a less credulous nature. The Dutch are a people who built windmills for others to tilt at, and Miss Van Buskirk's sturdy Dutch ancestry was strong within her when it came to a question of horse racing. She tipped her pretty nose in the air and said:

"There are a lot of 'ifs' to that ten thousand. If my grandmother was a millionairess, and if she died and left everything to me in her will, I'd have a million dollars."

"Wait until we're married," said Sidney. "When I buy you about five thousand dollars' worth of clothes, and about a thousand dollars' worth of jewelry, and take you around to all the swell hotels, I guess you won't kick so very hard at the races."

"You'd better wait until I say I'll marry you," suggested Connie.

"Oh, now, Connie, tell the truth—aren't we engaged?"

"No, we're not. Don't you fool yourself that we are; and, what's more, Mr. Sidney Waterman, don't you think we ever will be till you stop wasting your money on the races!"

"They're engaged, all right," said Dave Blelock to me, after we had bidden Sidney and Cornelia good evening, and turned to go to our own homes. "They're engaged, all right, but she keeps telling Sidney that she'll break it off. The races are Paris green to her."

### III

THE next morning, at ten o'clock or thereabout, the office manager called me to his desk.

"Say," he said, "there's a fellow on the phone says he's got to speak to you on a matter of great importance—a fellow named Waterman. Do you know him?"

"Yes, I saw him last night, but I don't know what he wants to talk to me about."

"Well, you can talk to him this time, but tell him this telephone is to be used only for business."

"Hello, Ed!" Sidney called over the phone, as if I was a friend of ten years'

standing. "How are you fixed for lunch to-day?"

I was tremendously flattered. Remember, Sidney Waterman seemed to me a figure of high romance. He was an artist. He played the races. He bought chop suey and champagne. He was engaged to be married to the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. He was a fellow of charming personality.

Of course I had nothing special to do.

"Say, come on and have lunch with me over at the Palmer House, then."

Any one who was eighteen years of age in Chicago thirty odd years ago will know immediately that I was absolutely laid out by this invitation. I had never lunched at the Palmer House. I had never even known any one who had lunched at the Palmer House. Lunching at the Palmer House was—well, why attempt comparisons? Never again can there be anything like it in my life. I had been told that the floor of the Palmer House was paved with silver dollars, and this, as I afterward discovered, was true to a limited degree.

I met Sidney Waterman in the lobby, and he led the way into the restaurant. He nodded as if he was on friendly terms with the head waiter. I remember that I vaguely expected to be thrown into the street. It didn't seem to me that boys of our age would be allowed in such a place; but I was agreeably disappointed. We were shown to a table, and menu cards were handed to us by a waiter who stood attentively while we decided what we would eat.

"Make mine a piece of rare roast beef and a browned potato," ordered Sidney, "and a piece of apple pie and some ice cream. Ask George if he's got some of those bread ends I had the other day. Know what I mean?"

"Yessir, yessir," said the waiter.

"What's yours?" inquired Sidney.

I was quite incapable of making an independent selection.

"I'll take the same," I said.

I hoped I said it like a man of the world, quite indifferent in a matter so trifling as the ordering of a lunch.

"Say, Ed," said Sidney, when we were about halfway through our lunch, "you know what I was telling you last night about my having a sure thing in the third?"

"Yes," I replied. "Have you any more dope on it?"

"You know what I told you," said Sidney. "It was going to be sixty to one."

I nodded.

"Well, they've kept everything so quiet that the first odds posted will be seventy-five to one."

"And you're sure you'll win?"

"Absolutely! It's a walkover! It's the first time the owners have tried to win with that horse, and he'll finish five lengths ahead of the whole field. You wait!"

"How much are you putting on him?" I said.

"That's the trouble—I've got to raise twenty dollars. Dave tells me that you've saved your money, and here's where I thought I'd give you a chance to make a killing."

I was flattered, yet at the same time disturbed. I did not have the Dutch ancestry of Cornelia Van Buskirk, but I had an ancestry equally conservative in such matters as horse racing. Every ancient and thrifty Caledonian in my line gathered like the clans when Cameron's pibroch shrilled among the Scottish hills. I could almost see and feel their shades pressing about me and saying:

"Don't you do it! Don't you do it! Don't you do it!"

I could almost see them gesticulating, shaking their fists under my nose, and crying:

"Stop it! Stop it! The nag has nae mair chance than the British at Bannockburn! Stop it!"

It was a fierce struggle. I have heard it said that we are ruled by our ancestors. Like many sayings, it is but a half truth. My ancestors struggled hard within me and about me, but they were routed. I could not refuse the small favor which Sidney Waterman, this prince of good fellows, this figure of high romance, had asked.

"How much do you want?" I inquired.

"Of course," replied Sidney, "the more we bet, the more we'll win. Could you raise fifty dollars?"

Here the ancestors achieved a partial victory.

"No, I can't get more than twenty dollars to-day. The bank won't let me draw more than that out at a time."

"I wanted to bet that much myself," said Sidney.

Again the ancestors achieved a victory.

"Oh, I don't want to bet. I'll lend you the twenty."

"All right, but I wanted you to win something, too."

"No," I replied. "I don't know the racing game as well as you do, and I'd rather wait awhile."

"All right," agreed Sidney. Then, suddenly, he became silent, and there came into his face that expression of childish, puzzled wonder which I had seen once or twice before, and which I was to see at odd times and long intervals as long as he lived. "Ain't it funny," he said, "that roast beef comes from a cow, just like milk?"

I merely nodded. At first those odd observations of Sidney Waterman's nearly made me laugh, but as I grew older they aroused within me a far different emotion. I felt as if I were watching some being of another world painfully groping, struggling, toward some enlightenment which never was to be bestowed.

Sidney and I went over to the savings bank where I had my exceedingly modest hoard, and I drew out twenty dollars. Having given him the money, I returned to my desk. I had not been busy more than ten minutes when the office manager said to me:

"Say, you got to tell your friends to cut out these personal calls. There's a girl on the wire. She says it's absolutely a matter of life and death, and she's got to talk to you."

"I don't know who it could be," I said.

"Name's Van Buskirk," he said, and looked at me sternly.

"Oh!" I replied. "I don't know what she wants me for. I never told her to call me up here."

"Well, go and tell her that the office telephone is not to be used for personal calls."

I went to the telephone, very much mystified. I tried to imagine why this most beautiful of all girls, betrothed to Sidney Waterman, my ideal of romance and adventure, should call me on the telephone.

"Hello!" I said.

"Hello!" came an eager voice over the wire. "Is that you, Mr. Ashford?"

"Yes," I replied.

"This is Miss Van Buskirk. You remember me?"

Remember her! I wanted to explain that I couldn't do anything but remember her, but I merely answered prosaically:

"Yes."

"Remember that argument we had last night about the races?"

I remembered quite well.

"I just want to warn you not to lend Sidney any money."

"Why not?" I said.

"Because," she said, "the races are ruining him."

"Well," I replied, "I can't talk to you very long over the telephone. They're pretty strict at this office. Maybe I'd better come out to see you this evening."

"I wish you would," she said. "No. 324 Deming Place. You take the North Clark Street car."

"All right," I said. "I'll be out about eight o'clock."

#### IV

CORNELIA VAN BUSKIRK was waiting for me on the stoop. She was dressed in a flowered organdie. You never hear of organdie any more, but it seems to me that at that time it was the only material for a young girl's summer dress. The sleeves were large and the skirt was quite full, but it was very tight at the waist and very small. Cornelia was a girl of her own period, and by methods of which men knew absolutely nothing, she had achieved a waist almost as tiny as one of Sidney Waterman's fashion figures.

"I am so glad to see you, Mr. Ashford," she said. "Come in for a moment. I want you to meet mother."

Mrs. Van Buskirk was in the front room, busy with sewing of some sort or another—I didn't notice particularly what it was. Oddly enough, what made the most impression upon me was the fact that she had a rather prominent mole upon her left cheek, from which a number of fine hairs extended themselves into the surrounding atmosphere, like the antennæ of some small marine creature. She had graduated into the less formal widow's garb of grays and lavenders, and, although at the time she was probably not more than forty-five years of age, I recall that I immediately regarded her as very advanced in years.

I know that her interests centered entirely around her child and her home. In fact, during the short conversation that followed, she explained to me that she had such a time in thinking of suitable breakfast dishes, because Cornelia did not care for stewed kidney and "things of that sort," as she expressed it.

Like all discreet mothers of that period, however, she remained only long enough to satisfy herself that I was a "young man who could be trusted." Then she made the pretext of some domestic duty that called her into another part of the house, and that was the last I saw of her until, remembering my manners as I was leaving, I asked to see her that I might bid her good-by.

After her mother had left, Miss Van Buskirk was very direct.

"Has Sidney tried to borrow any money from you?"

"Yes," I said.

"I hope you didn't give it to him."

"Yes," I said.

"How much?"

"Twenty dollars."

"Oh, you shouldn't have done that!"

"It was before you called me up."

"I'm so sorry!"

"He said that it was an absolutely sure thing."

"They're always sure things, and it's ruining him. It's even worse when he wins than when he loses."

"I'm awfully sorry—" I began.

"Oh, I'm not blaming you. It was mighty nice of you to lend him the money, but it's too bad I didn't have time to warn you."

"Did the horse win?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know. I haven't heard; but that doesn't make any difference. He's just crazy about the races, and it's going to ruin his whole life. We were in the same class at the Nettlehorst School. He's a good artist, and if he would work and study, he would have a splendid future. His teachers all said so; but he won't work except to make money to bet on the races, and he won't study, and everybody says that if an artist doesn't work and study, he'll never amount to anything."

There wasn't any question but that all she said was true. Although I know very little about art or artists, I do know, from what I have heard here and there, that Sidney Waterman had at least the spark of genius, and that if he had worked and studied, he might have been a really successful artist.

"Well," I said, "I won't lend him any more money if you don't wish it, Miss Van Buskirk."

"No, please don't," she said. "You'll



only lose your money, because he doesn't pay back, and it's just ruining him."

We devoted some little time to talk about Sidney Waterman, to comment about his charm, his sophistication, his artistic abilities, his prospects. Then, gradually, we drifted into other topics more nearly related to ourselves.

"I must be going along," I finally said, quite reluctantly.

At this Cornelia exclaimed:

"Oh, it isn't late!" She drew forth an old-fashioned ladies' watch, which was fastened to a long gold chain around her neck and tucked into the belt that encircled her ridiculously tiny waist. "Oh, my watch is stopped!" she exclaimed.

She gave it one of those little shakes which so many people regard as a panacea for all the ills to which watches are peculiarly subject.

"Did you forget to wind it?" I asked.

"Oh, no," she said, handing me the watch, which I inspected minutely.

"It is a beautiful watch," I said.

"Yes," she replied. "It was my grandmother's. Mother gave it to me for my birthday, but I guess it needs cleaning."

I examined the watch still more intently. I think my interest was mainly due to the fact that the chain to which the watch was attached, and which passed around Cornelia's neck, obliged her to stand very close to me; but such a situation cannot be indefinitely prolonged. After rendering my final judgment that the watch undoubtedly needed the attention of an expert, I returned it to Cornelia, and she returned it to her belt.

I then consulted my own watch, and found that it was early enough to justify my lingering for another half hour, which I did, and finally departed, renewing my promise to Cornelia that I wouldn't lend Sidney Waterman any more money.

## V

On my way to the office, the following day, I got the morning paper, and immediately turned to the racing news. Lapis Lazuli was among the also-rans. I wondered what had happened. I wondered how Sidney Waterman would explain this strange occurrence. It was like wondering how God would explain the failure of the sun to rise.

Then, for two or three days, I did not hear from Sidney. He had promised that

my twenty dollars would be repaid to me on the day following the race, but, of course, I assumed that since he had lost the twenty dollars, instead of winning hundreds, I couldn't possibly expect payment until a little later.

About noon on the following Saturday, I met him turning south into Clark Street from Jackson Boulevard. He was evidently in a tremendous hurry.

"What's your rush?" I said.

"Why, hello, Ed!" he replied, in his cordial, hearty manner. "You're just the fellow I want to see. Come on down here a minute, and then we'll go and have some lunch."

I was flattered because I was just the fellow he wanted to see, and I was charmed because he was Sidney Waterman.

"Sure," I said. "Where you going?"

He pulled a small watch out of his pocket. I recognized the watch. I had last seen it attached to a long gold chain which passed around Miss Van Buskirk's neck.

"I've got to hang this up for the afternoon," he said.

"Where did you get it?" I asked.

"It's Connie's," he said, quite frankly. "I told her last night it needed cleaning. She got it from her grandmother. It's worth quite a lot of money—solid gold case, Swiss movement."

"You're not going to pawn it?" I said.

"Just for the afternoon," he replied. "I'm going to make a killing—Pandexter, in the second race. I met the jockey that's going to ride him last night. He told me to bet my head off. Have you got any money with you?"

Perhaps you may have some understanding of Sidney Waterman's charm when I tell you that the struggles of my Caledonian ancestors, my promise to Miss Van Buskirk, and the recollection of a twenty-dollar loan that had not been paid, were all of no avail. I knew that if I told Sidney that I had eighteen dollars, my week's wages, in my pocket, he would immediately borrow all of it, and yet I replied:

"Yes, I've got eighteen bones. Just got paid."

He put his arm around my shoulder.

"Ed," he said, "this is the opportunity of your life. Come on with me to the races. We'll both come back with so much money that we'll have to hire a policeman to protect us!"

We entered a pawnshop, and Sidney pushed the watch across the counter.

"Go the limit on that, will you, please?" he said. "I just want the money for this afternoon."

Evidently these negotiations were an old story to him. The pawnbroker took the watch in his predatory fingers. He screwed a magnifying glass into one eye. He opened the back of the watch and examined its works. He took from the shelf behind him a small bottle with a long, tapering glass stopper, put a drop of the fluid from the bottle on the inside of the watch case, and instantly wiped it off.

"Six dollars," he said.

"Six dollars!" exclaimed Sidney Waterman. "Why, great Scott, man, the gold in that watch is worth more than six dollars alone!"

"Six dollars," said the pawnbroker.

"Say," said Sidney Waterman, "after all the trade I've given you, to offer me six dollars for that is simply an insult to humanity!"

"Six dollars," repeated the pawnbroker.

Sidney snatched the watch from the faded plush mat on which it had been reposing during this controversy.

"You're a hell of a business man not to accommodate a good customer!" he exclaimed dramatically.

His eyes flashed, his nostrils were dilated, and you might have thought he was meeting the great crisis of his life; but the pawnbroker was calm and unruffled. He turned his attention to other matters, doubtless of a gainful nature. There was nothing for Sidney to do but depart ignominiously, as I imagined; but somehow he achieved a manner that was a superb rebuke to the pawnbroker, even though the latter may have been totally unaware of what was happening to him.

"Come on, Ed! Thank the Lord we don't have to deal with that insect! There are men with hearts, even in this heartless business."

And Sidney stalked from the pawnshop quite the victor in everything but the particular matter at issue. I followed him as he hurried down the street, and then paused before another pawnshop, which bore so exact an outward resemblance to the first that only meticulous care in its examination could have noted any difference. Here were the silver trombone in a shabby velvet case, the flute inlaid with

mother-of-pearl, the alarming array of revolvers, the gold watches, the violins, the guitars, the diamond rings, the Masonic rings, the slightly dented brass candlesticks, the rifles, the fishing rods and reels, the cut glass vase, the chisels, hammers, drills, saws, planes, micrometer gauges, and other precision instruments, the mechanical drawing instruments in worn cases, the delicately fashioned and highly polished tools with which surgeons make people miserable that their miseries may be relieved, swords, sabers, silver spurs, cameras, binoculars, telescopes. It is singular how the chances of our individual fiscal difficulties make such an equal distribution of our petty properties among the pawnshops.

Into this second shop Sidney Waterman marched like a centurion leading his Roman column into Judea.

"Like to get about ten bucks on this," he said, handing over the watch.

Truly the pawnbroker must be a product of society long ago perfected. He doesn't present even minor variations. It matters not whether he be young, old, tall, short, fat, lean—he always looks like every other pawnbroker. Even when he is a blond—as rarely happens—he is dark and forbidding and ominous; and not only do all pawnbrokers look alike, but they all behave with absolute regularity in any given situation.

When Sidney handed over the watch, the second pawnbroker went through precisely the same motions as had the first. He might have been some automaton actuated by the deposit of a coin in a slot. He might have been one of those toys that you buy from sidewalk venders during holiday week, which always do exactly the same thing after they have been wound up. This pawnbroker, as I have said, went through precisely the same motions as his predecessor, and after he had finished he uttered precisely the same words:

"Six dollars."

"You're crazy!" exclaimed Sidney. "Why, that watch is worth a hundred dollars!"

The pawnbroker shook his head. This, doubtless, was a gesture imparted to him in the dawn of creation, when the planets were first set to whirling in their celestial courses.

"See here!" said Sidney. "Every dollar that I can get for that watch is as good

as eighty dollars at six o'clock to-night. Lend me ten dollars, and I'll give you the name of an eighty-to-one sure thing in the second race at Worth this afternoon, and you can clean up any amount you want."

I didn't think it possible that the pawnbroker could refuse this offer; yet refuse it he did, quite definitely, quite as if it was not his doing at all, but merely a blind obedience to certain stern decrees handed down by a power which he did not profess to understand.

"All right!" said Sidney. "Give me the six bucks, and take out two cents to buy a sporting extra this evening, so that you can read it to find out what a sucker you were to refuse my offer!"

The pawnbroker handed over six dollars and a ticket, which Sidney stuffed carelessly into one of his pockets.

"Come on, Ed!" he said. "We've just got time to make the one forty. We'll cut out the lunch and eat a sandwich on the train."

## VI

WE came out on the street and dashed over to the Dearborn Station. Sidney bought the tickets. He also bought parlor car seats. I thought this was a reckless extravagance, in view of the fact that every dollar which Sidney spent was just like spending eighty dollars at six o'clock that night; but Sidney never seemed to use conventional mathematics. His comparatively recent discovery that twice two always makes four, hadn't, as it were, got into his blood. He was too much of an artist to allow a fact of that sort permanently to concern him.

On the train, though he had paid grandly for parlor car seats, Sidney went and sat in the little bit of a stuffy smoking compartment. When we were settled, I said to him:

"What is the name of this horse?"

He looked cautiously around, and then leaned over and whispered in my ear to discourage eavesdroppers.

"Pandexter, in the second race." Then he added, in a slightly louder tone of voice: "You'd better give me what money you have. I know how to get the best odds."

Here again my Scottish ancestors were helpless. I handed the money over without the slightest hesitation. I didn't want to hand the money over, and I didn't want to go to the races; but I did these things,

somehow or other, because Sidney Waterman seemed to want them done.

A train boy came through with sandwiches and coffee, which was served in tin cups. We partook.

While we were eating and drinking, Sidney drifted off into one of the trances that apparently begot those quaint remarks of his which other people seemed to accept entirely without comment. The fire went out of his eye, his whole frame relaxed into the seat, and he looked dreamily out of the window at the passing landscape.

"You know, Ed," he remarked, quite seriously, "wouldn't it be funny if eggs didn't have shells?"

That was all. As soon as that queer waif within him had relieved itself of the thing that was troubling it, the usual Sidney returned. He chatted about the races. He joshed the boys who were selling racing dope in envelopes, and told them he had a better thing than any of them. He even tried to borrow ten dollars from the conductor, with a promise to return him fifty on the trip home.

As we entered the grand stand, Sidney said:

"They are just going to the post. There isn't a horse in the first race that I would bet a nickel on, so we will just stroll down a little while and look 'em over. As soon as they get paying off, we want to get our money down quick."

I had never been to the races. My preceptors had taught me that horse racing was an invention of the Evil One, merely called the sport of kings as a part of satanic propaganda; and yet the spectacle fascinated me. Somehow, though I had no money staked upon any horse in the first race, I got a kick out of that contest such as I had never before received from anything. I can honestly say that it thrilled me through and through. When the winners were announced, amid the cheering of the crowds, I was already—potentially, at least—a confirmed race track follower.

While the bookmakers were paying off the winners on the first race, we started down to the betting ring. On the way, Sidney suddenly seized me by the arm.

"Hey, Ed!" he exclaimed in an excited whisper. "See that fellow over there, just ahead of us, with the gray fedora hat?"

"Yes," I said.

"That's Larry Halleran, the biggest plunger in the country. He goes into the

clubhouse every day before the races, drinks a pint of champagne, and tips the waiter a dollar."

What could I say to this? I merely stared at the individual, and wondered how it felt to be in a continuous condition of such opulence and alcoholic elevation.

I quote the remark merely as an indication of the way in which Sidney Waterman soaked up the current gossip of the race track and of the race track hanger-on. He knew all the notables by sight, and he knew a great many interesting things about them that perhaps they didn't know themselves.

As we paused momentarily in one of the aisles of the grand stand, waiting for a little knot of people in front of us to disperse, Sidney said:

"Say, Ed, you'd better sit and wait for me in this aisle seat. You can get a swell view of the course, and you can see the ponies come out. There's no use your chasing me around the betting ring."

"Wait a minute," I said, or rather my Scottish ancestors said. "You've got eighteen dollars of mine, and you owe me twenty more."

"Yes," said Sidney. "I'll square that all up with you after this race."

"That isn't it," I went on. "I know you'll pay me back, but I just want to have a definite understanding—do you see?"

"What do you mean, definite understanding?" inquired Sidney.

"Well, I didn't want you to think that you were betting any of that money for me personally."

"Forget it!" said Sidney. "If you don't want to take a chance on the best eighty-to-one shot that ever pranced in front of the judge's stand, all right; but don't say I didn't offer to let you in on it."

"That's all right," I replied. "You know the races, and I don't."

"All right!" said Sidney. "Say I owe you forty dollars, no matter what happens."

I nodded, and in a flash he had disappeared down the steps leading to the betting ring.

## VII

I DETERMINED to get a look at the betting ring, and then to return to the place where Sidney had agreed to meet me, so I hastily followed him.

The betting ring was an inclosure per-

haps three hundred feet long and a hundred feet wide. Around all its four walls were little stands, like small tables, but higher. Their tops were about the size of a tea wagon, and they were about the height of a man's shoulder. Behind each one of them was a tall stool, on which sat the ticket writer. Beside this table was a blackboard of about the same size as the top of the table.

Beside the blackboard stood the bookmaker himself. His eye was constantly roving around, watching closely all the other blackboards in the betting ring, to see whether or not the odds on any particular horse were changing. He had beside him a pair of binoculars, so that he could readily read the writing that was on the blackboards at a considerable distance.

If a horse happened to open at, say, ten to one, and there was pretty heavy betting, perhaps the bookmaker across the ring would change the odds from ten to one to eight to one. Immediately the other bookmakers would follow suit, and thus the odds on the different horses were kept pretty much the same at every bookmaker's stand. Occasionally, however, a bookmaker, for his own personal reasons, would cut the odds on a horse or boost them, and the others, seeming to sense that it was merely a personal idiosyncrasy on the part of this particular bookmaker, would pay no attention to the change.

The object of each bookmaker was so to distribute his bets over all the horses in a race that, no matter what horse won, he would come out ahead on that particular race. The bookmakers were not gamblers—at least, the more successful ones were not. They were mathematicians, who had to make their calculations in their heads and make them very fast.

The crowd in the betting ring, as I viewed it from the stairway, could only be described as a seething throng. It was undoubtedly a throng, and it was undoubtedly seething—seething with excitement, with eagerness, with anticipation; each man seething with a desire to get his money down on the particular horse that he confidently expected to win the race.

Most of the men were straw-hatted, but Sidney Waterman happened to be wearing a light gray fedora hat with a black band. For this reason I was able quite easily to pick him out of the crowd and watch his actions.



I saw him hesitate before one of the bookmakers' stands and scan the figures on the blackboard. Sure enough, Pandexter was quoted, as Sidney had predicted, at eighty to one. I looked at the other blackboards that were near enough for the writing to be legible, and saw that these odds, or about these odds, prevailed pretty generally. One bookmaker offered seventy-five to one against Pandexter, another eighty-five, but the average throughout the betting ring was approximately eighty.

Just as I was expecting Sidney to take his money out and hand it over to the bookmaker, he suddenly turned and dived frantically through the crowd in the direction of another betting stand. I couldn't imagine what this maneuver meant.

Then I saw his head appear in front of a stand across the ring. It was as if a swimmer had dived into an ocean of straw hats and come up, blowing, fifty feet away from where he had made the plunge. Sidney was waving a bill in his hand. I couldn't tell what its denomination was. I saw the bookmaker shake his head, and then I saw Sidney turn and again dive into the whirlpool of straw hats, only to emerge a moment later at another stand and repeat the performance.

Then I lost him, and, deciding that I did not want to get into the crowd in the betting ring, I turned and went back to the seat in the grand stand which Sidney had indicated.

The horses came prancing out from the stables. I turned to a man seated at my elbow.

"Which one is Pandexter?" I said.

"Oh," he replied, "that eighty-to-one shot?" He consulted a program. "The jockey in yellow—yellow with one black stripe across his back. There he is."

"Thank you," I replied.

"Somebody give you a tip on that?" he asked.

"Why, no—not exactly," I said. "A friend of mine is betting on him."

The man shook his head.

"Hasn't a chance. Drummer Boy is as good as across the tape right now."

"What odds?" I asked.

"Oh, you couldn't expect very heavy odds on a favorite. I got two to one."

I made no reply. The horses were lined up in front of the barrier. The barrier was sprung, and the splendid animals

leaped out. The crowd, as crowds at races have done ever since races were started, exclaimed in a deep gasp that sounded as if every pair of lungs was using its last bit of breath:

"They're off!" I had always supposed that this cry, "They're off!" was a joyous, vigorous exclamation. I was surprised to find that it was a sort of a whispered gasp; yet that is all it was.

"They're off!" A whispered cry—as if they were saying, "He's dead," or "Don't tell anybody."

"Pandexter's ahead!" I cried.

"He hasn't a chance," said an excited voice, this time at my left.

I turned. Sidney was the speaker. He was standing on tiptoe, gazing excitedly out over the course.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

Although Sidney was of the nervous, excitable type, who was always letting go his emotions, who was always springing sensations, who was always breathing drama, I had never before seen him so excited as he was at that moment.

"That nag hasn't a chance!" he exclaimed. "No, I didn't put a nickel on him. I put every cent on Plum Tart, at three hundred to one."

"Plum Tart!" I said. "I never heard you speak of Plum Tart."

"No," he replied. "I didn't think he had a chance until I got down into the betting ring."

"What made you change your mind?" I said.

"Donny Tucker," he replied. "Didn't you see him in the betting ring?"

Since I didn't know Donny Tucker from *Little Tommy Tucker*, and had never heard of him before, it was not probable that I should have noticed him in the betting ring.

The horses were now at the quarter.

"Which one is Plum Tart?" I inquired.

"Purple," said Sidney. "See, he's nosing Drummer Boy out for the inside track. Purple! Go on, you Plum Tart! Go on!"

"Who is Donny Tucker?" I asked.

"The greatest jockey that ever lived," Sidney Waterman told me. "Why, he has ridden all the favorites in all the big races all over the world. Donny Tucker's better known than the President of the United States. I heard him whisper a bet on Plum Tart just as I was going to put my money down on Pandexter; so I knew

the odds would drop, and I dashed over to another bookie and said: 'Twenty-five dollars on Plum Tart to win.' I offer him my money; and he looks at me for a minute, and he don't say a word. Then he reaches out and grabs one of my five-dollar bills and hands it to the ticket writer, and the ticket writer passes me out a ticket. See there! Look! They're at the half! Plum Tart's in the lead. *He'll hold it!*"

"Yes," I said, excitedly; "but did you bet any more?"

"Sure I did! I dashed across the ring again. The crowd was yelling for Pandexter and Drummer Boy. The odds were dropping. 'Twenty dollars,' I said, 'Plum Tart.' He took ten dollars and handed me back the other ten. I got my ticket, and I dashed to the next stand and holds out ten bucks. The bookie shook his head. 'No more Plum Tart,' he says. I made another dash to another stand and got the other ten dollars down, just as every bookie in the ring erased the odds on Plum Tart. Here are my tickets. Seventy-five hundred dollars I'll cash in on that horse! See, there he is! Come on you Plum Tart!"

I could barely distinguish the different horses as they turned into the stretch. Sidney thought that his horse was in the lead, but I couldn't tell. Then I saw the yellow and black jockey frantically whipping his mount, and I saw his horse leap ahead almost as if the others were standing still, and come thundering down the stretch, fully two lengths ahead.

And then I saw something happen which I have been told had never before happened in like circumstances. The leading horse, within fifty feet of the judge's stand, with the race easily won—the horse under the jockey in yellow and black—stumbled, came to his knees, and then rolled over and over, flinging his rider at least fifty feet.

The horse with the purple jockey, the horse named Plum Tart, dashed under the wire, fully a length ahead of any of the others. An accident, the like of which had never happened before, had made Sidney Waterman the winner of seventy-five hundred dollars.

### VIII

A ROAR went up from the grand stand. A roar went up from all over the field.

"Plum Tart wins!" exclaimed Sidney. "Guess that was pickin' em! Guess that was some hunch!"

He pounded me on the back. He took me by the shoulders and shook me. Tears were streaming down his face. His hands were convulsively crumpling up the tickets.

"Don't do that," I said. "They won't be able to read the tickets."

I imagined that the bookmakers would seize upon the slightest pretext to refuse to pay their debts. It seemed to me inconceivable that you could hand over twenty-five dollars, and five minutes later go and collect seven thousand five hundred, merely because one horse had run around the race track in approximately one second less than some other horse. Such a thing was too preposterous for my well ordered mind to accept.

But Sidney Waterman, apparently, had no doubts whatsoever. Plum Tart had won, and that was all there was to it. He would go down and collect his money, and that would be all there was to that.

"Wait till they post the winners' names," he said.

Plum Tart, in the meantime, was trotting back to the judges' stand, and then the winners' numbers went up. The crowd applauded, and Sidney, grabbing me by the arm, dragged me toward the betting ring.

At the end of a race, if a favorite had won, there was usually a long line behind each betting stand. These were the bettors who held winning tickets; but in a case like the present, with a practically unknown and unbacked winner, there weren't nearly so many. There are always a few so-called "pikers" who will bet, perhaps, two dollars on any very long shot, but the regular race track followers do not do this. They follow the "dope," as it is called; and a bet of even two dollars on a horse at three hundred to one is usually considered just the same as throwing money away.

I learned afterward that such a thing as a horse winning at odds of three hundred to one was almost unheard of. When the odds were as great as this, it was generally understood in race track circles that the horse had no chance at all, and that you might literally "write your own ticket," as the saying is.

Well, here the undreamed of, the impossible, had happened. No, I could not believe that any man would be silly enough to pay back three thousand dollars just because Sidney Waterman, a few moments before, had given him ten dollars. That

was out of all reason. It couldn't happen; and yet there, right in front of my face, it was actually happening, or its equivalent was happening.

Sidney was handing over a ticket, the first ticket he had got—the five-dollar ticket; and the bookmaker, with an utterly stony expression on his face, as if such things were happening every day, was counting out fifteen hundred dollars in twenties, fifties, and hundreds. Sidney, his hands trembling, his mouth twitching, his face deadly white, was counting over the yellowbacks as he received them. Apparently the count was correct. He crunched the money up, without any attempt to put the bills in order, and stuffed them into one of his trouser pockets.

Then he dashed to the next stand at which he had placed a bet, and there I saw the miracle repeated. Three thousand dollars was paid over, without any protest, without any comment, apparently without any reluctance on the part of the bookmaker, although it seemed to me as if he ought to be suffering keenly.

Sidney stuffed this money into another pocket, and then, for the third time, this incredible deed was done, this miracle was wrought, this inconceivable and utterly mad transaction was consummated. Another three thousand dollars was handed to Sidney in twenties, fifties, and hundred-dollar bills.

Sidney lit a cigarette. Although he was tremendously excited, he was doing his best to put up a pretense of absolute calm. He wanted to appear as if winning seventy-five hundred dollars was such an ordinary thing as not to be worth a single hastened heartbeat. His hands were trembling so violently, however, that he had to put them into his pockets to keep them still.

"Well, now, let's see what's in the next race," he said.

"Great Scott!" I exclaimed. "You're not going to risk any of that on another race, are you?"

He looked at me as one might look at a child.

"I won it on a race, didn't I?" he said.

That was Sidney. Sometimes he worked without any logic at all, and sometimes his logic was absolutely irrefutable. I was the illogical one this time.

The bookmakers were beginning to check up the names of the entries for the third race, with the opening odds.

"I think I'll play a favorite," said Sidney. "There's Akron Andy, at even money. With a seven-thousand-dollar bank roll, I can afford to play a thousand each way, and there isn't a chance to lose."

I didn't even know what Sidney meant by "a thousand each way." This, as I afterward found, meant betting a thousand dollars to win, a thousand if the horse came in second, and a thousand on the chance of his coming in third, with diminishing odds for each place. However, Sidney changed his mind at the last moment, and bet two thousand dollars on Akron Andy to win, at even money.

Akron Andy did win. That is the remarkable thing about the race; and, to my mind, the remarkable thing about Sidney Waterman was that he could instantly readjust his mind from ten-dollar bets, which were all he had ever before been able to make, to two-thousand-dollar bets. It showed that he had a flexible imagination.

Sidney lost a thousand dollars on the fourth race, and—well, to be brief, at the end of the day he had eight thousand dollars. He had currency of every denomination crumpled up in horrible confusion in almost every pocket. He was continually taking money out of a pocket, straightening it out, looking at it, crumpling it up again and thrusting it into another pocket.

"I guess Connie will change her mind about the races now," he said to me, as we turned into Dearborn Street, after leaving the depot. "What do you say we go down to Kinsley's and get a little dinner? Then we'll hike out and show all this money to Connie, and make her sick."

"All right," I replied; "but aren't you going to get her watch?"

"Oh," he said, airily, "that doesn't matter. We can get that on Monday. Place is probably closed up now, anyhow."

## IX

WE had a very good dinner at Kinsley's, and, of course, we had champagne. Champagne wasn't merely a drink. It was a symbol of opulence, prosperity, and success. Yes, we had champagne and enormously expensive cigars.

Of course, you know enough of Sidney Waterman by this time to suspect that we did not ride out to the home of Cornelia Van Buskirk on a street car. No, we rode out in a victoria, quite grandly, as became

us. It was an open victoria, with a team of horses that pranced—in moderation, it is true, but pranced, nevertheless. We smoked our large black cigars, lolling back in the victoria; and our arrival at the Van Buskirk home was something of a sensation in the neighborhood, for it was a modest neighborhood, and they were modest people, and open victorias, with horses that pranced, even a little, had never entered into their scheme of things.

Cornelia Van Buskirk and some young man were seated on the front stoop. I don't remember much about the young man. It seems as if he faded into utter insignificance as soon as Sidney Waterman took the center of the stage, as he, of course, did almost immediately.

"Hello, Connie!" he said, in his cheerful, magnetic manner. "How would you like about a million dollars' worth of orange blossoms?"

She looked at him rather sharply, I thought, and then she looked at me. I guess that our faces were a trifle flushed. I can swear that neither one of us had taken more champagne than was entirely right and proper in the circumstances; but, perhaps, the events of the afternoon had done really more than the champagne to make us appear excited.

"You have been to the races, and you have had something to drink," she said.

"You win the two-horse parlay," replied Sidney. "Come on into the house a minute, Connie. I want to show you something important."

There was a center table in the parlor. Yes, they still called them "parlors," and they still had center tables. On the center table was a photograph album. I ran across it the other day, that same old photograph album, with a red plush cover and a brass clasp. I encountered it tucked away under a pile of old magazines in the loft, above my garage. If I should bring that photograph album into the living room of my house, and put it upon the perfectly correct walnut table that stands behind the overstuffed lounge that stands in front of the tapestry brick fireplace, I don't know what my wife would do, but it would be something terrible.

Well, other times, other manners. There was the photograph album. Sidney took it and set it aside. He put it on a chair, I think—I don't remember exactly. Then he took the center scarf that was draped

diagonally across the center table—which, by the way, had a marble top—and flung that over the back of a chair.

"Now," he said, standing in front of the table, "have a look!"

He began to pull money out of every pocket, slowly, deliberately. He would pull out a fistful, fling it upon the table with a dramatic gesture, and step back with his hands spread out, as much as to say:

"See what I've done!"

Then he would pull a fistful of currency from another pocket and repeat the process, flinging the money from him in a manner which was intended to say:

"This is nothing. This is but a trifle."

In a moment the table was heaped with currency—greenbacks and yellowbacks, new and old, all crumpled and creased and twisted up like the contents of a laundry bag that has traveled a thousand miles at the very bottom of your trunk.

"Great Heavens, Sidney!" said Cornelia. "Now I know you have been to the races."

Sidney laughed.

"You certainly guessed right that time, Connie!" he exclaimed. "You know there is enough there to buy us a house and all the furniture you want. We can be married to-morrow!" He grabbed a fistful of currency from the center of the table, raised it up, and dropped it in a green and gold shower. "We can be married to-morrow, Connie!"

"Oh, can we?" said Cornelia Van Buskirk. "I'll have you understand, Mr. Sidney Waterman, that I am not going to marry a race track gambler."

"But, Connie," said Sidney, "there's over eight thousand dollars there, and I made it with twenty-five dollars."

I wondered if Sidney would ever be even remotely aware of the fact that he had won at least seventy-five hundred dollars of the eight thousand by an accident. All the way home from the track, and during our dinner, he had been talking about his judgment, and I had been thinking about that accident; but I hadn't said a word about it, and I haven't to this day, and I don't believe that to this day Sidney has ever realized that the wildest chance, and not one tiny atom of judgment had put him in sudden possession of seventy-five hundred dollars.

"Yes, Connie," he said. "All I had



when I got out to the track was twenty-five dollars, and here's what I brought back—eight thousand big round iron men."

"Yes," said Connie, "and you'll lose them just as quickly as you made them. That's no way to take care of money, anyhow. Let's straighten it out."

She sat down in front of the table and began to arrange the money in neat little piles — one-hundred-dollar bills, fifty-dollar bills, twenty-dollar bills, ten-dollar bills, five-dollar bills. She straightened out each bill and laid it on the proper pile.

When she was perhaps halfway through her task, she came upon the pawn ticket that Sidney had received when he borrowed the six dollars on her watch.

"What's this?" she said, reading it. "'Aaron's pawnshop — lady's watch.'" She turned to Sidney. "Where is my watch?" she asked.

"It takes a little time to get a watch cleaned," said Sidney. "You ought to know that."

"You haven't left my watch to be cleaned," declared Cornelia. "You pawned my watch. You pawned my watch to get money to bet on the races!"

"Well," said Sidney, "what if I did? I won eight thousand dollars."

To him that seemed the unanswerable retort. To Cornelia Van Buskirk it seemed like nothing but a complete confession of the blackest guilt. For a moment she said nothing, but just stood there looking at him, her cheeks blazing, her blue eyes now blue flames of righteous wrath.

"Oh, what a contemptible thing! What a small, petty thing!" she finally exclaimed.

"Why, Connie—" said Sidney, as the beginning of an attempt to pacify her.

"I'm not Connie. You pawned my watch when I asked you to have it cleaned! You pawned my watch to bet on the races! It doesn't make a bit of difference that you happened to win one day. You'll lose and you'll lose and you'll lose and you'll lose!" exclaimed Cornelia. "Don't you ever come into this house again!"

And she stalked from the room, her figure very erect, her head very high.

Ten minutes later, Sidney and I were standing on the corner of North Clark Street and Deming Place, waiting for a cable car. The only indication he had given of any concern over his dismissal by Cornelia Van Buskirk had been a period of silence much longer than usual. He had

gathered up the money from the Van Buskirk's center table, and merely said:

"Coming along, Ed?"

"Yes," I had replied, picking up the pawn ticket, which Sidney had forgotten or overlooked or ignored — I never knew which.

Sidney seemed to be in deep thought as we walked slowly in the direction of Clark Street. Then, suddenly, as we stood there, he raised his head and remarked:

"Say, Ed, did you ever think that maybe on Mars the houses live in the people instead of the people living in the houses?"

The next day I expected that Sidney would send or bring over the money he owed me, and I intended to ask him for six dollars to redeem Cornelia's watch; but I heard nothing from him the next day, or for several days. Finally I called the Triangle Engraving Company on the phone, and asked to speak a moment to Mr. Waterman.

"He ain't here no more," said a voice.

"Where can I find him?"

"Don't know nothing about him;" and the receiver was slammed into place.

I didn't know Sidney's home address, so I decided to hunt up Dave Blelock and see if he knew it; but that evening, when I left the office, I found Sidney waiting for me in front of the elevators.

"Why, hello, Ed, you're just the fellow I wanted to see. Where have you been keeping yourself for the last ten years?"

"Same old place," I said.

"Let's get a tub of suds," said Sidney, pausing in front of the door to the Rialto Bar.

We went in.

"Ed," said Sidney, as the beer was placed before us, and he took his mug in his hand, "you're the best friend I have in Chicago. You've never failed me yet, and you must see me through now."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Why, I've got to raise twenty dollars before to-morrow noon. There's something going to be pulled off in the fourth race that I've got to get in on."

This time my ancestors won an easy victory. I didn't lend Sidney the twenty dollars; but I did take six dollars of my own, get Cornelia's watch, and take it out to her. She knew at once that it had been redeemed with my money, so well did she understand Sidney Waterman.

I saw Sidney Waterman again from time to time; and now and then, because I somehow liked the man in spite of everything, I routed my ancestors and lent him small sums. These were repaid, in part, by a very gorgeous wedding present which he sent my wife, but which, I suspect, was never paid for.

## X

As I said in the beginning, whenever I think of Sidney Waterman—and I am reminded of him quite frequently—I think of him as I saw him for the first time, and as I saw him for the last time.

For many years, now, I have lived on the Pacific Coast, but my business takes me back to Chicago occasionally. On my last trip I thought that I would stop in to see Sidney. I knew that he was still working as a commercial artist. Mutual friends had told me that, and so I looked him up. He had a little studio in an old building on South Dearborn Street. There wasn't even an elevator. I had to climb two flights of stairs, and finally I found him. Upon the glass of the door there was a sign:

## SIDNEY WATERMAN

Commercial Drawings

I opened the door. A man sat before a drawing easel. He was intent upon what was before him. He didn't even turn as I entered; but I could see, even from the rear side view which I had of his face, that it was Sidney Waterman. I hesitated for a moment.

"Hello, Sid!" I said.

He turned, and started to pull a piece of paper over the racing dope sheet which he had been studying so intently. It was certainly not the same racing dope sheet that I had seen thirty years before, but it was exactly the same gesture.

"Oh, hello, Ed!" he cried, in the same old hearty manner. "Gee, I thought you were that fellow from the advertising department of Rothschild's. They've been

on my neck all morning for a drawing, and I haven't even started on it."

"Well, how's everything?" I said.

"Oh, pretty good," said Sidney; "pretty good. How is Connie?"

"First rate," I replied.

"How are the kids?" said Sidney.

"Well," I said, "Edward, Jr., will be graduated from Berkeley next June, and Cornelia is going to be married in the fall."

"Gosh!" said Sidney. "Are they that old?" Then, after a long pause: "You know, Ed, I always figured that you were just the fellow for Connie to marry."

"I'm glad of that," said I.

There was another long pause. Finally, Sidney looked up from the racing dope sheet in front of him. The old mist came into his eyes. Again he was the trance medium, closing the circuit between a world beyond our ken and the simple things we are able to understand.

"Do you know, Ed," he remarked, "there are places in the ocean so deep that nothing can live there, not even a fish?" Then instantly he was himself again, animated, eager, precisely the same as he had been thirty years before. "Say, Ed," he continued, "if I could get hold of five thousand dollars, I could make a killing that would put me on my feet for the rest of my life!"

"I'm afraid I can't help you, Sid," I replied. "Five thousand dollars is still a lot of money to me."

"Listen," he returned. "Could you get hold of a hundred before two o'clock this afternoon? I've got an absolutely sure thing in the second race at New Orleans."

When I returned to the Coast, I met a drummer in the smoking compartment of my Pullman. You always do; and he always talks, if you let him. This drummer's platitude was that it pays to stick to one thing.

"I've been in the overall game for sixteen years," he said, "and I'm going to stick to it. And just look at Henry Ford!"

THE END

## THE ARCHITECT

THE architect may shape the architrave,  
And trace the groining of the soaring nave,  
Yet where the one so skilled of hand that he  
Can mold the elm, that fair cathedral tree?

Clinton Scollard

# Young Lochinvar

WHAT IS A YOUNG MAN TO DO WHEN THE GIRL HE LOVES WILL  
NOT MARRY HIM BECAUSE HER PARENTS NEED HER?

By May Stanley

CHRISTOPHER RAYBURN was reading aloud from a volume of verse, his pleasant voice making music of the familiar lines:

"Oh, young *Lochinvar* has come out of the west;  
Through all the broad border—"

Dorothy's key clicked in the lock, and at the sound of it her father put down the book and turned to his wife.

"That must be Dorothy. Dear me, I had no idea it was so late!"

Mrs. Rayburn did not glance up from the bit of bright-colored embroidery on which she was working. A slender, graceful woman, she had good looks of the kind that continues indefinitely, and beautiful hands that showed to advantage when busy over needlework.

"That you, darling?" she called softly.

"Yes, mother dear."

There was the sound of parcels sliding down on the kitchen table. Dorothy came into the small living room, bent to kiss her mother, and then, in response to an inviting gesture, went over to perch on the arm of her father's chair.

"Darling, before you sit down, would you just close this window back of me?" Mrs. Rayburn said. "I seem to feel a draft."

Retracing her steps, Dorothy closed the window. Then she went back to her place on the arm of the big chair.

"How are you to-night, precious?" her father inquired, drawing her down beside him. "You seem flushed. I hope you haven't been working too hard in this trying weather."

"No, not very hard."

In spite of her efforts to make it sound bright and cheerful, Dorothy's voice was dispirited.

"Now, now! I don't like this." Chris-

topher Rayburn shook his head in gentle reproof. It was a handsome head, covered with thick, dark hair, and just brushed with gray at the temples. "I don't like it at all. You are tired."

"I carried some parcels home."

"So that's the difficulty!" He beamed down at her, fondly. "My daughter must learn to make her head save her small toes. Always do your ordering in the morning, my child, and then there will be no need of carrying parcels."

"Yes, daddy," Dorothy murmured, obediently, leaning back in the comfortable crook of his arm.

Her head ached. She didn't want to talk, to explain things, but just to sit and rest. Anyhow, there would be no use in telling daddy that one could buy food cheaper in the shops that had no delivery service. He would never understand the wisdom of dealing in such places—nor mother, either. Bless their dear, extravagant hearts! Neither of them knew anything about pinching pennies, about the need for small, grubby economies. Well, some one in the family had to know! Dorothy sighed and got to her feet.

"Not comfortable, dearest?"

"Heavenly comfortable, daddy. I'd like to rest on your shoulder for a million years, but I've got to change my dress and start dinner."

"So soon? Well, yes, it is getting late."

"Want any help, Dorothy?" Mrs. Rayburn asked, as if repeating her share of a pleasant formula.

"No, thank you, mother dear. I can manage."

"Then I'll just work a bit more. This is going to be a perfectly *sweet* collar!"

"I'm sure it will be, dear."

Alone in her tiny room, Dorothy let the

smile slip from her face. If her mother would only realize that they hadn't any money to waste on embroidery materials or—or new hats!

The girl sighed wearily, thinking of the hat that Mrs. Rayburn had bought the day before. Silly that a hat could make such a difference; but there it was. Paying for it had meant giving up the week-end at Easthampton with Bobby's sister. Dorothy would have to tell Bobby to-night that she couldn't go. He wouldn't understand, of course. No man would understand; but she *couldn't* go there, among strangers, without a new dress. It just wasn't possible. Oh, if mother hadn't seen that hat yesterday!

A tear trickled down Dorothy's cheek, but she shook it off fiercely. No use in crying over spilled plans! She would simply have to tell Bobby how things were.

Slipping out of her office frock and donning a soft pink and white voile, Dorothy sat down before the small dressing table to brush her hair. The mirror reflected a tense young face with a faint line of worry between the brows, and dark smudges of weariness about the soft brown eyes.

It had been a trying day at the office, with nerve racking heat, and, as if that weren't enough, with the added confusion that always followed Mr. Hazleton's return from a business trip. Dorothy had had to write dozens of letters and answer innumerable telephone calls.

"Miss Rayburn, will you check up on the Appleton account?"

"Miss Rayburn, take a few more letters, please."

And through it all she had felt the ache of disappointment. How wonderful the thought of two whole days at Easthampton had been! A long white beach with the tide creeping in, and cool winds bringing the tang of salt water—oh, well! No use thinking of it now. It wasn't so bad for her, of course. Dorothy was used to relinquishing cherished plans, but it was horrible to disappoint Bobby.

Rising abruptly, she went into the kitchen. She had groceries to put away from the heavy packages she had carried home. She had the luncheon and tea dishes to wash. Mrs. Rayburn didn't like to wash dishes, for she thought it spoiled her hands; so she always left them, vaguely planning to do them later, but never quite getting around to it.

The faint line of worry deepened as Dorothy saw the month's milk bill lying on the ice box. What a lot of milk and cream they had used! Not that it was really so much, but the prices of everything seemed to be steadily increasing, and her father earned so little by writing book reviews. Dear, impractical daddy! He didn't realize that the money he made each month did very little more than pay the rent of the apartment.

Three chops—one apiece. Perhaps daddy would like two; but you didn't need a great deal of meat in hot weather, and there were plenty of vegetables.

## II

WHEN Dorothy had cleared away the main course and put dessert on the table, Mrs. Rayburn said:

"I saw the dearest little *crêpe de Chine* in Altman's to-day, darling—priced away down, only fifteen dollars. It will be just the thing for your week-end."

"That would be nice, dear, if I needed it," Dorothy replied brightly; "but I've changed my mind about going."

"Not going?"

"No, I think not. It will be much more restful to spend Sunday at home with you and daddy."

"But, my dear child"—her father's voice was disturbed—"you shouldn't be so changeable. You have promised these people, and Mr. Locke's sister—er—"

"Mrs. Sterling," Dorothy murmured.

"Sterling—yes, to be sure—Mrs. Sterling will be expecting you."

"I'm going to tell Bobby to-night."

"Ah! Will young *Lochinvar* be here this evening?"

"*Lochinvar*?"

Her father beamed amiably.

"Yes, I thought of young Locke this afternoon, while we were reading the poem aloud. *Lochinvar* must have been an impulsive sort of person—rather like Bobby Locke, I should think."

Dorothy had nothing to contribute to this theory, and Mrs. Rayburn cut in:

"It's really rather inconvenient, Dorothy, to have you make such a sudden change of plan. We had no idea you would be home Sunday, and I accepted when the Bradleys telephoned to ask your father and me to go motoring. It would be such a nice change—we so seldom have a day in the country, and my little new hat will be



adorable for motoring: but, of course"—she sighed—"we'll give it up since you are to be home. I'll tell Mrs. Bradley—"

"Oh, no, mother! I shan't mind, really. I'll just have a long, lazy day here alone."

"But I can't—" Mrs. Rayburn began doubtfully.

"Here's the coffee, dear," Dorothy interrupted. "I think it's just right. Will you try it? While you and daddy have your coffee, I'll just clear things away and do the dishes. Bobby's coming this evening, you know, and I haven't very much time."

"Nor have we," replied her mother, glancing toward the clock. "Your father and I are going to play bridge with the Martins. May I wear your wrap, Dorothy? Mine is so shabby, but"—she smiled bravely—"I won't even *think* of getting a new one just now."

"No, I'm afraid we can't manage it," Dorothy said regretfully.

"And I can wear your wrap on Sunday if you're not going to be away for the weekend," Mrs. Rayburn reflected. "Perhaps it's just as well that you did change your mind."

Dorothy washed the dinner dishes, put them away, swept the kitchen, ran to get her wrap for her mother, found her father's gloves, and, when they had finally gone, put the living room in order. She had barely time to smooth her hair and give her nose a hasty dab of powder before Bobby Locke's special whirl of the bell heralded his arrival.

He came quickly in from the tiny foyer, and a sense of well-being flooded over Dorothy at the very sight of his clean-cut face and laughing eyes. Little things, like being tired and disappointed, always dropped away before the sound of Bobby's laugh, the lilt in his voice, the contagion of his boundless enthusiasm. Then the thought that Bobby was to share in her disappointment clouded her face and chilled the radiant welcome in her eyes. Might as well tell him now.

"Bobby," she began, hesitated, and then, in true Dorothy fashion, plunged straight ahead—"Bobby, I can't go to Easthamp-ton on Saturday."

Bobby stared at her for a moment.

"Well, but—great Scott, I thought it was settled! What's happened?"

"Nothing's happened. It's just—" Sud-

denly she realized the utter futility of trying to make excuses to Bobby. He always saw through them, and, sooner or later, got at the truth. "It's just this," she burst out desperately: "I haven't anything to wear. I was going to have a new dress, I had the money saved for it, and then—and then mother saw a hat she liked and—and bought it."

"You mean you'll have to use the money you were saving—"

"I have used it. Mother doesn't know, of course—"

"But, good gosh!" Bobby exploded, jerking himself to his feet. "You mean to say you didn't even tell her?"

"Oh, no!"

"Did she *need* the hat?"

"No, she didn't need it. You don't understand, Bobby. Mother just adores hats, and she never can resist one that she knows will look well on her, so"—Dorothy put out her hands in a hopeless little gesture—"there it is."

"Well, then, if she's got to have new hats every few minutes, why doesn't your father pay for them?"

Dorothy flushed miserably.

"Daddy would, if he could. He'd love to give her a hundred hats. I hate having to tell you disagreeable things, Bobby, but I suppose it's best, for then you'll understand. You see, daddy's earnings are so small! And neither of them have any idea how it costs just for food and shelter and clothing. They've never learned to count pennies—"

"Well, you've had to learn," Bobby said grimly, his young face set in stern lines. "Look here, Dorothy, I couldn't say anything before this, but now that you've spoken of it—well, do you realize just what your father and mother are doing to you?"

"What do you mean?"

Bobby took a step toward her.

"I mean," he said, "that the hat is only an instance of what they do all the time. They've never worried about anything, or taken any responsibility; but you—you slave and work and plan for them, and what's the result? You're hurting yourself and hurting them!"

With a sharp intake of breath, Dorothy turned abruptly from him and went over to the window. Bobby stood looking at her drooping head until he could stand it no longer.

"I—I'm awfully sorry, Dorothy!" He strode across the room and gathered her close to him. "I'm a beast to criticize them, I know. It's just—when I think of you—"

"You don't understand them, Bobby," said a muffled voice from his shoulder. "Mother would simply *die* if she knew that because of her hat I can't have my dress. They adore me, and it's really not their fault that they don't seem to know anything about money. Can't you see?"

Above her head Bobby scowled blackly at the ceiling, but his voice was suspiciously sweet:

"Of course, dear! Let's not talk about it; but you *will* come down to Easthampton? What do you care about clothes? Why, that dress you're wearing—"

Dorothy giggled faintly.

"This is a house dress, Bobby dear, and I love you too much to go down in a house dress to visit your sister. No, I can't go. It just isn't possible."

There was a long and rather tense silence. Then Bobby capitulated.

"Oh, all right! I'll call Agnes first thing in the morning and tell her—well, I'll tell her whatever I can think of between now and then. We'll go to some jolly place for dinner on Saturday night, and on Sunday we'll—"

"You will do nothing of the kind," Dorothy said with conviction. "You're going down to Easthampton."

"Oh, am I?" Bobby held her out from him and shook her gently. "Now, you listen to me, and get this straight—I can make up my own mind without any help from you, and I've decided to spend the week-end in New York, for the very good reason that it's where you are. Do I make myself clear?"

Dorothy said that he did.

### III

DURING the week that followed, disappointment over the abandoned visit was blotted out by more immediate and serious problems.

Since his return to the office, Mr. Hazleton had again mounted his hobby—life insurance for all his employees—and was riding it to a successful finish. Dorothy had managed to evade the issue for some time, but she was finally compelled to admit to Mr. Hazleton that she couldn't take out any insurance.

"Not just at this time," she pleaded, "but a little later, perhaps—"

"That," said Mr. Hazleton, coldly, "is not an excuse to which I care to listen. The records of our office should show that each employee of the organization has taken out adequate insurance. Just what are your reasons for opposing this very sane plan?"

"I'm not opposing it," Dorothy faltered. "It's only that I can't afford it just now. Perhaps a little later—"

Mr. Hazleton shook his head.

"No, Miss Rayburn, it won't do. A little later you will be telling me the same thing. I am sorry that your attitude compels me to speak plainly." He cleared his throat. "Employees who do not see that I am acting in their interests in this matter are not of the type that I wish to continue in my office. I am striving to build up an organization"—he was fairly launched now—"of earnest, thoughtful young men and women—young men and women wise enough to protect themselves against the various contingencies that arise in—er—life. I still hope, Miss Rayburn, that you belong in this category, but I must insist on definite proof of it within a few days. Will you be good enough to send Mr. Marston in?"

Dorothy found the treasurer, gave him Mr. Hazleton's message, and then sat down at her desk with pencil and paper to see if two and two could in any possible way be made into six.

Try as she might, she could find no way of apportioning her salary so that it would meet the added demands of payments on an insurance policy. Of course, there was her small savings bank account, but that must not be touched except in case of illness. The line of worry between her brows deepened. It gave her a dizzy moment to realize that somehow the policy must be taken out—Mr. Hazleton had made that very clear; but how?

As if in answer to her question, the telephone rang. Dorothy heard her father saying:

"Is that you, dearest? Good! I want to see you as soon as possible—something important."

"Oh, daddy, anything wrong?"

"No—no, indeed! Something very right; but I don't want to talk about it over the telephone. Meet me at twelve thirty, if you can." He named a near-by

tea room. "Yes, twelve thirty. Good-by, dearest!"

Dorothy was waiting at the tea room entrance when her father appeared, obviously in high good humor.

"Please, daddy, what is it?"

"Just a moment, dear." He smiled benignly at her impatience. "Wait until we are comfortable."

It seemed that he would never finish ordering, but at last the waitress left them. Glancing about to make sure that there was no one within hearing, Christopher Rayburn leaned toward his daughter.

"Dorothy"—his voice was impressive—"I have found an 'Eleusinia'!"

She stared at him blankly, hope draining slowly out of her eyes.

"You did—what?"

"Found a copy of 'Eleusinia'—here in New York!"

"Is that what you had to tell me?"

"Yes. I have always felt quite sure that more than one copy must still exist; and if in existence, why not in America? This morning my belief was rewarded. I came across one, in a little shop on Fifty-Ninth Street."

"Did you?" Dorothy said drearily. "Just what is it, daddy?"

Her father shook his head, with a mildly reproachful air.

"I'm quite sure, my dear, that I have spoken of the book before, and recounted its history. Perhaps it did not impress you so much as I could have wished. The 'Eleusinia'—he put his finger tips delicately together—"was issued in 1891, in Hereford, England. Its author, Mr. Arthur Machen, was but seventeen years of age when this, his first brain child, was published. Collectors have supposed that the only copy now in existence is the one in the author's possession."

"I'm glad you found it," said Dorothy, smiling faintly, "since it makes you so happy, daddy. Have you it with you?"

"Well, no. You see, the shopkeeper happens to know something of its value. He asks forty dollars. Unfortunately I have not that amount at the present time, and my next check is not due until—"

"But, daddy, I haven't that much money to spare, I'm afraid, and we mustn't take anything from the savings bank."

Her father sighed patiently.

"I am sorry to trouble you with financial matters, but there is a business angle

to this purchase. In fact, I shall have no trouble of disposing of this copy for three hundred dollars."

Dorothy sat bolt upright, staring at him incredulously.

"You mean—some one would pay you that much for it?"

"Of course! I could name a dozen collectors who would jump at the chance. And now, my dear"—he glanced at his watch—"if you do not mind arranging—"

"Of course, daddy" She stood up. "We'll go around to the savings bank this minute!"

#### IV

THREE hundred dollars! That would leave a profit of two hundred and sixty. Dorothy forgot the heat of the afternoon and the nerve racking noises that beat up from the street below. She put down the sum—two hundred and sixty—on the page which held her hopeless figures of the morning. There it was, plenty of money for this month's needs. Now she could use her salary to pay for that wretched insurance. No need to be afraid of meeting Mr. Hazleton's eye—no need to be afraid of anything!

She put out her hand to the telephone, feeling that she must tell Bobby right away. Then she remembered that he was out of town—some business at the company's head office in Philadelphia. He would be back to-morrow.

There would be enough money for the new dress now. The visit to Easthampton need not be put off.

The sound of the buzzer brought her back from daydreaming.

"Take some letters, Miss Rayburn, please."

"Yes, Mr. Hazleton."

When he had finished dictating, Dorothy said:

"I think I can take that insurance, Mr. Hazleton."

"What's that?" Mr. Hazleton said sharply. "Ah, yes—sensible girl! Thought you would see it. Tell Marston about it, and he'll arrange details. That's all."

Back at her desk again, she glanced at the clock before beginning on the last lot of letters. Perhaps by this time daddy had sold the book. How pleased Bobby would be when she told him of her father's good fortune! A little flame of happiness ran over her at the thought of Bobby. She

could feel it leaping away to find him, to envelop him in the same rosy glow.

Her desk phone rang as Dorothy was putting on her hat to go home.

"Darling, is that you?" Mrs. Rayburn's voice said. "How nice! I was afraid you might have started by now. Yes, I'm down town—with your father. We thought it would be pleasant to have dinner before going home. Will you meet us?"

"Yes, mother. Did daddy sell the book?"

"Yes, indeed! We'll tell you all about it at dinner. Wonderful, isn't it? Can you come soon? That will be lovely! Good-by, dear."

In the entrance to the restaurant that Mrs. Rayburn had named, Dorothy waited contentedly, watching the couples meeting, trying to decide who were sweethearts and who weren't, listening to the clock behind her ticking off the seconds. They were late, but then mother never paid much attention—suddenly she saw them. No, it couldn't be—yes, it was!

They were a handsome couple—even Dorothy, in her stricken wonder, admitted that. Mrs. Rayburn held about her a dull blue silk wrap with a drift of delicate gray fur at the throat. Christopher Rayburn, in a suit of silver gray, his shoes like polished ebony, a silver gray hat in one hand, might just have been turned out from the hands of a celestial tailor. People turned to look as they passed.

"Dorothy darling, I hope you haven't been waiting!" her mother exclaimed. "I didn't realize how much nearer you were to this place, and I still had some shopping to do when I telephoned—why are you staring so?" She gave a pleased little ripple of laughter. "Although I don't wonder, after the shabby things I've been wearing for ages!"

She sank down beside Dorothy in a halo of silk *crêpe* and violets.

"I've been looking at this wrap for months, literally months, but I never dared dream of owning it," she went on; "and then this quite wonderful bit of good fortune came along. I told your father when he telephoned me. 'Christopher, do not delay one moment,' I said; so he got the book into a collector's hands at once. Just think, dear! It was sold *immediately*."

"But—but"—Dorothy's panic found words—"how much did you get for it, daddy?"

"Three hundred and twenty-five dollars," Christopher Rayburn proudly replied. "Of course, if I had waited, it might have fetched a higher price, but I do not—"

"After all," his wife beamed, "it doesn't do to be grasping, does it? Poor darling!" She slipped an arm through Dorothy's. "You seem dazed, and it's really not to be wondered at. I can scarcely believe it myself. Shall we go in? I'm sure we all need food after such an exciting afternoon!"

Seated at a table in one corner of the dim, cool room, Dorothy managed to ask:

"Mother dear, how much money did you and daddy spend to-day?"

"Money? Dear me, we shall have to count up before I can tell you that."

Dorothy tried again.

"How much did your suit cost, daddy?"

"Ninety dollars, I think. Yes, ninety—quite a wonderful bargain."

"And—and your hat and stick? And mother's wrap?"

Mrs. Rayburn's smile vanished in a slight pout.

"Really, Dorothy, is it necessary to be such a little bookkeeper? As a matter of fact, the wrap was a perfectly marvelous bargain—marked down from two hundred and thirty."

"Yes, but what did you have to pay for it?" Dorothy persisted.

"Only a hundred and ten. Getting it at such a reduction, I felt we could afford a little frock for you—"

"But, mother dear," Dorothy wailed, "I don't want it! I don't want anything but to save a little money—"

Her mother's face assumed the expression of a slightly sullen martyr.

"Of course, if you're going to take *that* attitude, Dorothy! I had planned to have a happy little dinner, but it doesn't seem possible. I do *hope* you are not growing mercenary!"

"I'm not finding fault, mother dear; but I do think—"

"Christopher," said Mrs. Rayburn, in an injured voice, "how much money have we left? Do tell Dorothy."

"Why—er—I'm not just sure." Mr. Rayburn plunged his hands into his pockets, brought up some change and one neatly folded bill. He tried again, but without further success. "That must be all," he meditated. "Dear me, how money does slip away!" He counted it. "Ten



dollars and—er—some change." Then he brightened. "Enough for dinner, so *that's* all right, eh, Dorothy sweetheart?"

Mustn't spoil their little party! Mustn't let them know how disappointed—

"Yes, daddy," she replied, managing a small smile. "That's all right."

She would take back the frock. Wonder how much it had cost! Oh, if her mother would only be sensible!

"And we have a surprise for you, dear," Mrs. Rayburn was saying. "Tickets for the theater—isn't that delightful? I knew you wanted to see 'The Glass Slipper,' so while we were in the neighborhood we got seats for to-night."

"That would be lovely, dear, but I'm afraid I'm not up to it. You see, I've had a bad headache all day, and if you don't mind, I'll go home after dinner. There's still time to turn back the extra ticket. No, I'm quite all right—just a headache. You and daddy have a good time, and tell me about the play when you come home."

# V

DOROTHY awoke from terrifying dreams, in which she was being smothered in yards and yards of silk *crêpe*, while Mr. Hazleton stood near and threw great sheaves of insurance policies over her whenever she struggled out from the choking folds.

Mechanically she rose to the morning's routine. She made coffee, put the dining room in order, set the table, and then slipped back to her own room to get into her office dress. The mirror showed a white face with eyes that were smudges of fatigue. Perhaps she was going to be ill! For a moment she thought blissfully of long days in bed, secure from the haunting fear of Mr. Hazleton. No, she daren't be ill just now!

There was no sound to indicate that her parents had awakened. Dorothy went back to the kitchen, drank a cup of coffee, and ate some toast. Then she went to their door and called softly:

"By, dears! I'm off."

"By, precious," returned her mother's sleepy voice. "Don't work too hard."

In the street, Dorothy, glancing toward a near-by clock tower, saw that she would have time to countermand the order for the "little frock" her mother had purchased. At least she could save that much.

A saleswoman took the slip, looked doubtful, and said:

"That was bought yesterday, wasn't it? I'll have to see about it."

She went to consult some one higher up. After a time she came back with the department head in tow.

"This is the young lady," she told him, and went away.

The department head fixed Dorothy with a firm smile.

"The frock you speak of was an advertised special yesterday. No mail orders on those, and no returns."

"But I'm not returning it. I haven't taken it out yet. I just want—"

"Sorry"—the smile grew wider and firmer—"no returns on yesterday's advertised specials. Anything else we can do for you?"

"No, thank you."

There was barely time now to reach the office before half past nine.

While her hands flew swiftly over the typewriter keys, Dorothy's mind kept pace, trying to discover some way of escape from the catastrophe that loomed so inevitably ahead. She would have to talk with her father and mother, try to make them see—

A weary sigh followed the thought. What good would that do? They wouldn't understand. They would just think her impatient and fault-finding. But suppose she lost her job? Even through the heat a cold chill crept over her at the thought that Mr. Marston might even now be arranging for that policy—the policy she couldn't possibly pay for!

\*No use in planning and struggling, it seemed. No matter how hard she tried, there was always something—

Her telephone whirled. The girl at the outside desk said:

"Telegram for you, Miss Rayburn. I'm sendin' it in."

Wondering, Dorothy read:

Back at six. Meet me for dinner. Great news.—BOBBY.

"Some chance!" Bobby Locke said proudly, at the end of his recital. "What do you think of it?"

Bobby going away, going to Porto Rico! The world about Dorothy reeled madly, and then broke into fragments. A cold hand seemed to be clutching at her throat and stopping her breath. Then she heard some one saying:

"A wonderful chance, Bobby—perfectly wonderful!"

She scarcely knew it for her own voice. Her lips were trembling. She put up her handkerchief to hide them, while Bobby stared at her with puzzled eyes.

"I don't believe you see what it means," he said. "We can be married right away—think of it!—instead of waiting two or three years. It's going to be our wedding trip!"

A film wavered before Dorothy's eyes. Porto Rico—palm trees feathering out against a velvet sky—humming birds poised above flaming blossoms—sudden, soft winds at dawn—noontime a blaze of color—the sun going down in a flame of red and gold—a young moon swinging low above the blue of tropic seas—color and light and perfume. She was walking through all this, in the moonlight, with Bobby.

"It would have taken me two years here—two years at the very least," Bobby was saying, "to work up to the salary they're going to pay me down there. It makes everything clear sailing for us. I know it's asking you to rush, but you don't mind, do you? We'll have to leave next week, and—"

"Bobby!" Dorothy put out a hand, as if to ward off the eager rush of his words. "Don't, please! I—you don't know—"

"Why, what's the matter? We've got to make our plans. Everything's arranged at the other end. There's a house goes with the job, it seems. Great Scott! Think of it, Dorothy—*our home!*"

"Oh, Bobby, *please!*" The words were a wail. "Don't say anything more. Don't you see—I can't go!"

For a moment Bobby stared at her. Then he said in a bewildered voice:

"But—but—do you mind telling me why you can't? Perhaps I was mistaken. Is it that you don't want to go?"

"Oh, Bobby! Not want to go! How *can* you think that?"

"You are all my life," her heart was crying. "I shall die if you leave me!"

"Well, then, if you want to—"

"I'd be the happiest girl in the world if I could go with you, Bobby—surely you know that; but I can't!"

"Why not?"

She lifted desperate eyes to his.

"You know why—daddy and mother. It just isn't possible for me to leave them now. It would be like—like deserting a couple of children!"

"Children who could take darned good care of themselves, if they had to!" Bobby retorted hotly. "Dorothy, don't you know this is the best thing that could possibly happen to them?"

"No, it isn't. It sounds all right to *say*, but they couldn't manage without me, Bobby, really."

"Then I suppose you haven't intended to marry me—ever!"

"I thought—later on," Dorothy said forlornly, "they'd learn to manage better; but just now, Bobby, it—it isn't possible."

There was a long silence, while Dorothy struggled vainly for composure. Finally Bobby said:

"Do you mind if I talk this over with your father?"

"Why, I don't know. It wouldn't help any."

"I'll play fair. I won't insist, or anything like that."

"What will you say?"

"Just ask him if it's all right for you to come along with me."

Dorothy shook her head miserably.

"He won't be willing. They'd never consent to letting me go so far away—even if I could leave them."

## VI

"REALLY, Mr. Locke"—Christopher Rayburn beamed mildly on Bobby Locke—"I am pleased to hear of your good fortune—sincerely pleased; but as to letting Dorothy go off to the ends of the earth"—he shook his head gently—"her mother does not approve, nor, to be quite frank—do I."

"You mean you don't approve of me?" Bobby said bluntly. "I'd like to get this straight, if you don't mind."

"Oh, my dear boy, quite the contrary! We think highly of you—most highly; but Dorothy is too young to marry, even if we could bring ourselves to consider such a separation. I am aware of the fact that most modern young people take matters of this kind into their own hands, but Dorothy, I am happy to say, has not the modern viewpoint."

"You don't seem to take Dorothy's happiness into account," Bobby argued. "She's willing to go with me. The only reason she refuses is because she feels that she can't leave you."

"Sweet child!" the sweet child's father murmured affectionately.

"That was what made me come to you," Bobby went on doggedly. "I'll be away three or four years, at the very least. I'm to have a salary large enough to marry on. I want to take Dorothy with me, and she wants to come. There it is! She'll marry me if you make her see that it isn't necessary for her to stay here."

Christopher Rayburn shook his fine head decisively.

"It pains me," he said, "to find myself in opposition to the wishes of young lovers; but I cannot consent to allow any *Lochinvar*, no matter how worthy, to carry my daughter off in this fashion."

"*Lochinvar*?" Bobby Locke murmured blankly.

"I had forgotten," said the older man, smiling apologetically, "that modern universities concern themselves with business education rather than with literature. I was merely referring to an old ballad which has always been a favorite of mine. A young man, *Lochinvar* by name, carries off the maid of his choice against the rather vehement opposition of her family."

"Well, he had the right idea!" For a moment Bobby brightened, as if some ray of hope had reached him, but then he lapsed again into gloom. "I suppose in his case the girl was willing."

"Yes," Christopher Rayburn agreed serenely. "I believe she was."

The days that followed seemed to slip away like beads from a broken string—one, two, three! Soon only two of the precious days were left; and then, one morning, Dorothy woke to realize that the very last one had come. To-day Bobby would sail.

She sat up in bed with a choking gasp. To-day! Oh, surely not *to-day*! She looked desperately around the tiny room. To-morrow morning she would wake again to this room, and the next morning, and the next—an eternity of gray to-morrows hemmed in by narrow walls. Dropping down among the pillows, she began to sob despairingly.

Some time later Mrs. Rayburn tapped on her daughter's door.

"Dorothy," she said, gentle surprise in her voice, "are you awake? Better hurry, dear. It's rather late."

Her mother had burned the toast, and the coffee was like pale gray dishwater. Dorothy lifted the cup to her lips and put

it down again. Why try to eat? Why try to do anything? At this time to-morrow—

"I'm going down town this morning," Mrs. Rayburn said cheerfully. "Shall we meet for lunch?"

"No, dear, I can't." Her mother looked up in faint surprise. "I'm lunching with Bobby. I—he's going to-day."

"Really! Dear me, I had no idea it was to be so soon. I remember, just the other day, hearing you say—"

Dorothy got up from the table.

"I must go," she said dully. "It's late."

"Yes, I'm afraid it is. Shall you see him off?"

"I'm to lunch with him on the boat. Good-by, mother."

"Good-by, precious! Try to be home early."

## VII

BOBBY was waiting for Dorothy at the entrance of a long dock that yawned cavernously behind him. He seemed to be in surprisingly good spirits, talking excitedly as they went down the long shed, past mountains of barrels and boxes and towering heaps of trunks, toward the gangway, where an officer watched with bored eyes a crowd of people trooping ashore. Handkerchiefs were waved, last messages were shouted, and somewhere a woman sobbed noisily. Dorothy drew back.

"Why, Bobby," she said, "people are going ashore! When does the boat sail?"

"Not for ages yet," Bobby reassured her quickly. "Lots of people still aboard." He led the way down a long corridor, talking rapidly. "Nice boat, isn't it? I want to take you all over it after luncheon; but first we'll go down and have something to eat."

"Isn't it rather early?" Dorothy said listlessly. How could he talk about food now?

"Yes, but we might as well have lunch before looking around." In response to Bobby's gesture, they took seats at a table some distance from the windows. "This all right? No point in sitting near the windows, when there's nothing to see but the docks. To-morrow there'll be nothing to see but water. Funny, isn't it?"

He talked on and on, his words falling on unhearing ears. Dorothy was looking at him, stamping on her memory the thick crop of black hair with its unruly wave, the eyes that were shining with a strange,

baffling light, the clean-cut line of chin and jaw.

"I love you!" her heart whispered. "I love you, and you are going away. Perhaps I shall never—"

There was heavy trampling on the deck above, and a deep voice shouted orders. Dorothy tried to hear what they were, but Bobby talked steadily on. Then the thin, high notes of a bugle rose above other sounds; and then—Dorothy started up.

"Bobby! What was that?"

"Nothing. Sit down, dear. We've plenty of time."

Plenty of time? Why, the boat was moving!

Dorothy sprang up and raced to a window. Already a line of gray, heaving water showed between them and the dock—a line that widened as she stared. Turning, she raced for the door, but Bobby was beside her, his hand on her arm.

"Dorothy!"

She paid no attention to him.

"Dorothy, listen to me!"

This tense, harsh utterance was not at all like Bobby's voice.

"I won't!" she gasped. "You tricked me! You said the boat wouldn't leave—"

"Be still," Bobby snapped, "and listen. Then you can do as you wish. I know I tricked you. I had to. There wasn't any other way. Everything's arranged. If you'll go with me, the captain will marry us this afternoon. It was my only chance, and—and I took it."

They measured each other with defiant, angry eyes. Dorothy's head went up proudly.

"Suppose I refuse? What if I won't marry you?"

"In that case you will go back to New York on the pilot boat. I shall not try to stop you, nor will you ever see me again."

He stood, waiting. Very slowly the air about them, tense with the clash of wills, became surcharged with something stronger than all else in life, something that welled up in Dorothy's eyes, putting out pride and anger. She turned uncertainly.

"Never see you again! Oh, no! Bobby, I—I'm going with you!"

The mail from home was in. Dorothy Locke, holding an envelope addressed in her mother's familiar slanting hand, followed her husband across the garden to their favorite seat under a banana tree.

Bobby began to open and read letters, but Dorothy, the envelope in her lap, sat quite still, all her senses drinking in the noonday beauty around them—giant banana leaves spreading overhead like cool, green sails, flaming yellow lilies opening their hearts wide to the caresses of the sun, the soft splash of a tiny fountain lifting its music toward a blue velvet dome that was the sky, while over all the fragrance of innumerable scarlet blossoms hung like a dream.

Dorothy sighed rapturously.

"Oh, Bobby, it's so beautiful!" She tucked a hand in his. "I don't *want* to read letters."

"Don't do it, then," her husband advised cheerfully.

"I must."

She sighed, broke the seal, drew out the closely written sheets, and read:

PRECIOUS DAUGHTER:

You must, of course, know what a painful shock your wireless message held for us. I was quite ill for several days, although I should perhaps have been prepared for something of the sort, knowing as I do that you inherit from the Rayburn side of the family a deplorable tendency to change your mind suddenly and unreasonably. Your father, need I say, is deeply grieved and hurt—

Poor mother and daddy! Dorothy's eyes brimmed with swift tears. She was a beast to be so happy, while they—

—but a recent turn of events has been keeping his mind very much occupied. Probably you have never realized that our finances have always been extremely limited, although we have done what we could for you at all times, and without counting the cost. In the last month things might have become difficult, had not your father entered into negotiations with a lecture bureau. The people in charge of it made a very handsome arrangement with him, to appear before a selected list of clubs, speaking on literary topics of their choosing. Already he has addressed two such groups with marked success. His bookings will take him to Chicago in the early winter, and I shall go with him, as I have not visited your Aunt Augusta in some years—a pleasant little trip which I should have foregone had you been with us, as I could not think of leaving you alone. Now, however—

At this point Dorothy Locke ceased reading and turned a bewildered face toward her husband.

"Bobby," she said slowly, and quite as the other *Lochinvar's* bride may have spoken when she made the same discovery, "you were perfectly right—mother and daddy don't need me at all!"



# Hyenas

AN EPIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, WHEREIN A COWARDLY SCAVENGER BEAST BOWS TO THE SCORNFUL MANDATE OF HIS MASTER, THE MIGHTY LION

By L. Patrick Greene

LITTLE Hercules Robinson shook with rage. His blue eyes smoldered threateningly. His tangled shock of red hair seemed to stand erect and to quiver to its roots with the wrath that possessed him.

He pointed a warning finger at the obese, flashily-dressed man who stared insultingly at him.

"Get hout o' 'ere," Hercules said hoarsely. "Get orf o' my farm—an' you, too, miss!" His finger traveled toward the girl.

She was dressed as Rhodesia—South Africa's newly settled territory—had never before seen a woman dressed. Her closely fitting riding habit was of dark green; in the lapel of the coat she wore a large boutonniere of purple passion flowers. A high silk hat perched jauntily on the heavy, braided coils of her flaxen hair.

"Get hout o' 'ere," Robinson said again, and glared fiercely at a trooper of the British South Africa police, standing by.

"Oh, come now, Runt," the policeman began easily, and somehow contrived to make the nickname sound like a title of respect. "You don't have to take on like this. Mr. Bailey, here, makes you a straight business offer for your three thousand acres. That's all."

"That's all!" the Runt mimicked. Only his mother had ever called him Hercules, and she died in a New York slum soon after giving birth to him. Consequently, she never knew what a misnomer the name was.

The Runt's muscles relaxed somewhat, but his eyes still gleamed. He addressed himself now to the policeman, ignoring the presence of the two others.

"Well, hif that's all, w'y don't yer beat hit an' leave me in peace? I've said 'No'

once or twice most polite like; I've said hit ten or twelve times not so blamed polite; an' hif yer 'ang abart 'ere much longer, I'll say hit again damned ugly. So, w'y don't yer beat hit?"

The policeman looked helplessly toward his companions. They were standing at the open doorway of the hut. The girl, her lips slightly parted, her eyes gleaming with happy contentment, gazed across the beautiful valley to the blue, distant hills. The man, a shrewd calculating expression on his face, was looking at an outcropping of rock not many yards from the hut.

"Well," the Runt said impatiently, "out with hit. Wot's on yer mind, Jenkins?"

"Look here, Runt," the policeman counseled swiftly. "If you'll take my tip you'll close with Bailey's offer. It's ten times as much as the place is worth and—"

"Then w'y does 'e bid hit?" Hercules countered swiftly.

The policeman shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"You've been told many times that Miss Bailey happened to be riding this way, liked the view and all that, and went home and pestered her old man to buy it for her."

Hercules Robinson snorted.

"An', supposin' that's true, does she reckon she can get my farm w'ich I've sweated hover, an' spilled blood hover, an' fought fer an'— Yer know wot I've done, Jenkins, since I've been 'ere?"

The policeman nodded sympathetically. The Runt's battle against his own inexperience, against savage tribes and wild beasts, against the forces of nature and the greed of his own kind, was well known among the many epic struggles which had accompanied the winning of Rhodesia.

"Yes, o' course yer knows all about hit," Hercules continued. "An' she finks she can come an' buy my land, just as heasy as kiss 'er 'and, because she likes the view. Gord! Don't she fink I've got heyees? Don't she fink I like the view, too?"

"Now, look here, Runt—" the policeman began soothingly. But the little man was in no mood for further discussion, or to listen even to the advice of a man who had given many proofs in the past of his sincere friendship.

"There ain't no 'look 'ere' to hit, Jenkins," he declared hotly. "I ain't believin' that this pot-belly Bailey is anxious to buy me hout just because his lily-fingered daughter likes the view—not that hit 'd make hany difference hif 'e was. But 'e ain't. That story's all me heyee an' Betsy Martin."

"Now, Runt—" the policeman tried to interrupt.

"Hif hit was so, w'y did he send men hout 'ere to look the place hover? An' they weren't farmers, neither. They was mining engineers. An' no doubt they found hout wot I've known hever since I came to the place. They found hout that there's wot looks like a rich gold reef."

"Well, but don't you see, Runt—"

"An' hit's because of that, Tubby Bailey wants to buy. A lot 'e cares about a view for 'is daughter! All 'e wants is to dig in the dirt an' get dirty yellor dirt from hit. An' there'll be a lot o' hugly tin buildings, an' a crowd o' 'ard cases livin' in 'em who'll upset the niggers that I've nursed like a 'en with chicks. An'— Oh, wot's the use o' torkin'?"

"You're a blamed fool, Runt," the policeman said sharply. "Suppose Bailey is after gold—as is most likely—what do you care? You've always said you wouldn't mine it yourself, and you owe it to the country to see that all its resources are fully developed. Close the deal with Bailey on the condition that he gives you a percentage of all mineral rights, say five per cent; that 'd be fair. You could buy another farm and equip it with newfangled machinery, and raise blooded stock, or do whatever you've a mind to."

Hercules Robinson shook his head and said slowly:

"Yer don't hunderstand, Jenkins. Would yer think of offerin a woman money for 'er only kid—a brat she'd prayed fer, suffered 'ell fer—an' tell 'er she could heasy

buy another, an' per'aps better-lookin'? 'Course yer wouldn't! Go, now, Jenkins, an' take them Baileys with yer, before I begin to think ye're tryin' to take my kid away from me!"

The policeman nodded and joined the others at the door of the hut.

"It's no use, sir," he explained in a low voice. "He won't sell, no matter what you offer. I know the Runt. He's an obstinate little cuss."

## II

BAILEY pursed his lips and whistled softly; a hard, merciless light came into his eyes. He looked away from the outcropping of rock, gazed at the distant hills, and then back to the rock again.

"It's a pity, Sylvia," he said smoothly. "And it is such a wonderful view!"

The girl pouted like a spoiled child.

"You're not going to give it up as easily as that, surely, father? Make him sell. How can that grubby little cockney appreciate all this?" Her graceful, sweeping gesture indicated all that was visible from the crown of the hill on which the Runt had built his homestead.

The policeman glanced around, and was relieved to see that the Runt was stooping down, his back to the door, absently stroking the magnificent lion skin which served as a rug. The Baileys had ceased to exist for him.

"Father!" the girl appealed again. "You're not going to let that little cockney beat you—"

"He's not a cockney, miss," the policeman interposed. "He's a Yankee—an American—and he's particular to see that everybody knows it, too."

"Really!" The girl's tone was indifferent. "Why, I thought all Americans said 'I guess' and 'I calculate,' and talked through their noses."

"The Runt had a hard time when he was a youngster, miss. He was a potboy in a New York water front saloon when he was eight, and worked like a slave there for nine or ten years. He hardly ever saw the sun; was half starved and beaten. That's what killed his growth, but it couldn't kill his heart, or stop him from dreaming. And he was always dreaming of ownin a big farm."

"Really!" Miss Bailey's tone was icy, now.

"And then he was shanghaied aboard a

sailing ship, and, as luck would have it, he couldn't get away from the sea for another seven or eight years—hating it all the time, too. He sailed on English ships, miss. That was where he got the cockney accent. And he kept planning and dreaming about the farm he was going to own some day.

"You ought to get Padre Joyce to tell you how the Runt got in with the Pioneers, and came up here with them, and settled on the three thousand acres that all Pioneers got. Wish I'd done the same, instead of swapping them for worthless gold claims like a lot of us.

"So, when you come to think of it, you can't blame the Runt for wanting to hold on to this place of his. For nearly thirty years he'd talked of owning land and—"

The policeman's voice trailed away. Whatever hope he may have had of persuading the girl to let Hercules enjoy in peace the home he had built for himself out of the wilderness, vanished before the selfish expression of her eyes.

"Really!" she said again, and added, "How amusing!"

"I see nothing amusing about the Runt's land hunger," Jenkins retorted warmly.

"Land hunger!" she echoed. Her eyes opened wide in surprise, her face softened. Then a supercilious air masked her real self once again.

"Most amusing!" she murmured again, and turned her back on the policeman.

"We'd better go, now, sir," Jenkins said to Bailey, and walked over to where three horses stood in the shade of a wide-spread tree.

The girl slowly followed him, hitting impatiently with her riding crop at the grass tops. She mounted gracefully, disdaining Jenkins's offer of assistance, gathered up the reins, and called out: "Try him once more, father." Then she raked her horse with the spurs and galloped swiftly down the winding trail.

Jenkins scratched his head, looked dubiously at Bailey, who had turned to re-enter the hut, then in the direction taken by the girl. Deciding that it was his place to follow the girl—the bush is full of pitfalls for the unwary rider—he mounted and rode after her.

### III

At the sound of the departing horses, the Runt straightened himself, stretched lazily, and turned toward the door.

He stiffened on seeing Bailey standing there.

"Ye're still 'ere?" he growled angrily. "Get hout or—"

His hand dropped to the revolver holster on his belt.

Bailey smiled tolerantly.

"You can't frighten me with that pop-gun of yours," he said crisply. "This isn't America, you know."

"A Henglishman's 'ome is 'is castle," Hercules grunted. "Hif I horder yer to get hout an' yer don't, w'y—"

The little man's pause was expressive, but it was wasted on Bailey, who answered laughingly:

"That sounds very pretty, Mr. Robinson, but you are not an Englishman. You're a Yank. Should anything happen to me, my countrymen would give you a taste of the medicine popularized by your countrymen. I refer, of course, to a rope flung over the branch of a tree, with you dangling at the end of it. Lynching, you call it, I believe."

"They'd give me a vote o' fanks, that's wot they'd do," the Runt growled. "But come off yer perch, ducky. Wot are yer 'anging about 'ere for? W'y ain't yer gone wiv them other two?" The Runt was a bit ashamed that his anger had led him to a childish threat of gunplay.

"Ah, now you're talking sense," Bailey remarked complacently. "I'm making you one last proposal—"

"If yer hofferred a million quid I wouldn't sell—an' that's flat."

"I'm not going to offer you more. My original offer stands. It's more than the place is worth, and, I warn you, I make you that offer for the last time."

"I refuse hit—so that's that."

"Don't be too hasty. I'm warning you. I'm going to have this land of yours—"

"Oh, yer are!" Hercules interrupted with labored sarcasm. "An' w'y? 'Cause yer daughter loves the beautiful view?"

Bailey waved his hands airily.

"Have it that way, if you like. I don't mind admitting that I like the—er—view myself."

"Yer do?"

Bailey smiled coldly.

"Yes, I do. And what I want I generally manage to get—and specially if it has to do with land or anything else connected with this country. I was one of the men who put up the money that made

the occupation of this country possible. Otherwise, this place you call Rhodesia'd belong to the Dutch, or the Portuguese, or to the niggers."

"Oh, 'ell," the Runt interrupted wearily. "Stow yer gab. I'm willin' to forget that Cecil Rhodes dreamed a big dream—an' didn't sleep hover hit, neither. An' I'm willin' to forget wot hus Pioneers did; 'ow a few 'undred o' hus came hup 'ere, through a bloomin' savage country, buildin' roads an' townships, an' fightin' through a couple of bloody rebellions, an' all that. Wot we done an' wot we're doin', don't amount to nothin'. Wot 'appened is that yer, an' a few greasy coves like yer, planted yer money in Lunnon, an' hovernight, so to speak, it took root an' grew hinto a place like this, makin' a bloomin' paradise hout of a blinkin', 'owlin' wilderness!"

A wintry, mirthless smile came again to Bailey's face.

"Because of my investments, I happen to have a strong voice in the councils of the Chartered Company," he said, significantly; "and if I demand this place of yours as—er—interest on my investments—why, a way will be found to get it for me, that's all."

He backed a few steps toward the door, intimidated by the expression on the Runt's face.

"You won't listen to reason?" he added hastily.

"Not that sort," Hercules said fiercely. "An' now, get hout!"

His last word was punctuated by a revolver shot, and a spurt of dust arose from the floor close to the toes of the fat man's polo boots.

"My word!" Bailey squealed, and turned, ran swiftly to his horse, scrambled awkwardly into the saddle, and rode away.

#### IV

THE Runt, his face white with rage, watched until Bailey had passed out of sight. Then, gradually, he relaxed from his tense attitude, his eyes softened, the corners of his mouth quivered, and he burst into a peal of uproarious laughter.

"My word!" he says. 'Ell! Didn't 'e look funny? 'My word!'"

Presently he sobered somewhat and called:

"Sixpence!"

A native came from one of the near-by buildings, leading a horse.

The black man greeted the Runt with a grin of affectionate respect, then, in the musical, clicking speech of the aborigines, gave a rambling report of the routine events of the morning and the preceding night.

Hercules listened gravely, patiently, occasionally interjecting a question or a shrewd comment. His speech was every bit as pure as the native's.

The report finished, the Runt gave his orders for the day, mounted, and started off on his inspection of the three thousand acres, singing happily as he rode. The shadow of the menace cast by Bailey was entirely forgotten in the joy of ownership.

At the small kraal located not far from his homestead, he was mobbed by a horde of naked children, who scrambled for the lumps of sugar he tossed among them. The womenfolk looked on with contented smiles, vaguely conscious that they owed their security from famine and the attacks of bloodthirsty foes to the big heart of this little white man.

Leaving the kraal, the Runt rode toward the river which marked the southern boundary of his farm, and, emerging presently from a thickly wooded patch on to a green carpeted hollow, he surprised a hyena feasting on the bones of a duikerbok.

"Gord!" he muttered. "'Ow I 'ates the stinkin' things. They ain't got the sand to fend fer themselves. They let others do the killin' an' then they cleans hup—just like that chap Bailey."

He drew his revolver and fired.

The hyena toppled slowly over, its teeth still clamped to a bone.

"'Ell! 'Ow I 'ates them brutes," the Runt said.

He jabbed his spurs into his horse, and that beast, unaccustomed to such treatment, reared and almost unseated the rider, then cantered on swiftly. Not until they had gone a hundred yards did the little man succeed in regaining his stirrups and pulling his horse to a more sober gait. Hercules Robinson was very much of a sailor when it came to horsemanship.

#### V

A WEEK passed quickly, a period of busy days. New ground had to be broken, a mile or more of fencing to be erected, the cattle to be dipped to destroy ticks. From the rising of the sun until its setting, the Runt toiled beside his native laborers; encouraging them with jesting threats of fur-



ther work whenever they showed signs of surrendering to their lazy philosophy.

And when the day was over, happily tired, Bailey and his threats forgotten completely, Hercules would sit at the door of his sleeping hut and watch the stars multiply. Occasionally he occupied himself in making out his will. He wrote laboriously, his tongue lolling out of the corner of his wide open mouth. It was a document indicative of the man's character. Its opening paragraph read:

I leave my farm and all that it contains to chaps who, like me, lived in slums, but always pined for land, who have had to live and eat and sleep in the fogs of cities, yet are always looking for an opportunity to live in the sun, who think niggers have as much right to live as they themselves have, and who will only shoot game when they are hungry, and not always then.

On the eighth morning after the visit of the Baileys, the Runt awoke as usual before the rising of the sun, bathed, and ate the frugal breakfast prepared by his cook boy, and then hurried out to the day's work.

He was surprised to find the men of the kraal, his laborers, standing idly about the cattle stockade.

"What now?" he chided them. "Are you all workers of charms? Will the land be plowed without a hand set to the plow handles? Will the fence poles dig their own holes, and the wire stretch itself upon them? Speak!"

The black men milled together uneasily, and whispered excitedly, avoiding the eyes of the little man.

"Well, who speaks?" There was a snap to his voice now. The lines about his mouth tightened.

They pushed Sixpence, his boss boy, forward.

"Sixpence speaks for us all, little Great Heart," a giant laborer muttered.

"It is none of my doing, Baas," Sixpence began. "I have no part in the folly of these others." He indicated the men crowding behind him, with a contemptuous wave of his hand. "Without doubt, they have eaten the poison weed of folly. So, Baas, although I speak the words they have put into my mouth, they are not my words, neither do my thoughts follow the winding spoor of these fools."

"The sauce is thick," Hercules said softly. "The meat it garnishes must be very strong!"

"Truly, Baas," Sixpence agreed gravely. "Listen, now, to the meat on the bone which these fools throw down for you to chew. They say that they have worked for you these many years—ever since you first came to live among us—and not once have they asked you for the pay that all white men give to their black workers, not once have they asked you for the yellow money which is the white man's wealth. But now, they say, their eyes are opened. Other white men have sent word to them, men at the Lonely Mine, across the river, offering them much money if they will go to dig for gold. And they will go unless—"

Sixpence hesitated.

"Unless?" the Runt prompted sharply.

"Unless the Baas will pay them at least half what those men at the mines will pay; and unless the Baas will pay, too, the money they think they should have received all these years they have been working for him."

"And how much do the men at the mine offer them, Sixpence?"

"At first they offered ten shillings a week, Baas—and that, as you know, is more than most white men pay. But these laborers who have lived off your bounty would not listen to that. And at last the mine men offered forty shillings a week, and because that money is great, these, your people, listened and agreed to take it if you would not hear their demands."

Hercules whistled dolefully; his face was very grave. It came to him, suddenly, that Bailey was at the back of this. The fat capitalist was a large shareholder in the Lonely Mine; and that shaft was already being worked to its full capacity. Bailey, the Runt reasoned, hoped, by getting his laborers away from him, to make his occupation of the land insecure.

Without laborers, Hercules's crops would be ruined; worse than that, the jungle would take to itself again the land he had so painstakingly won from it. Overnight, as it were, rank grasses would choke the crops, and vines would entwine about the trees, killing them. Without laborers, the Runt's plans for developing his land would come to nothing, the necessary fencing could not be done, the new cattle kraals could not be built.

He looked keenly at the men, hoping to see some sign of wavering, of reluctance to carry out their ultimatum, which would justify an exposition of the things he had

done for them, of the payments he had made in peace, security, and prosperity.

But their faces were as expressionless as wooden masks, and—knowing them as he did—he saw that whatever he said would be words wasted, and would lower him in their estimation. Their minds were made up; nothing short of a miracle would change them. And the Runt was fully aware of his limitations as a miracle worker.

He could not meet their demands, even if he had considered them just. His capital was the land. He had no cash, and would have none until his harvest was reaped, or unless he sold his cattle. And to sell now would mean an enormous loss.

He might have made promises of payment in the near future, hoping to win the natives over to a better understanding before the day came when the promises were to be fulfilled. But he knew that a pound sterling to-day loomed infinitely larger in the eyes of the natives than the promise of ten pounds a week hence. Promises would not hold them.

Well, he would let the crops go and give his whole attention to his cattle. It would be a big job alone, unaided.

"Does Sixpence speak for you all?" he asked.

"For all of us," several answered.

"For all—except myself," Sixpence added.

The Runt smiled at him.

"What do you mean, Sixpence?"

"I mean, Baas, that I stay with you. These others have short memories, they are brothers to the dog apes. Yesterday is as forgotten as the day of their birth. But I remember. Therefore, I stay."

Hercules nodded.

"When do you go?" he asked the others.

"To-morrow—if we must," a spokesman replied. "But cannot the Baas pay? We have asked only half what the other white men will pay. Lower than that we will not go."

The Runt shook his head.

"With the white man's money, I cannot pay."

"Then to-morrow we go. The Baas does not blame us?"

"Nay; I do not blame you. This is not the first time I have seen children leave their food to follow a honey guide bird through thorn scrub and over mires. And I have seen them, after they have gorged themselves with honey, sick to their

bellies, return gladly to the food which they had disdained. So you go to the mine to-morrow?"

"Aye."

"And to-day?"

"To-day we are still your men."

"Say you so!" he shouted wrathfully.

"Then why do you stand idling here, jabbering like so many baboons? To your work! Hasten!"

With these caustic words he drove them to their several tasks, and all that day he rode among them, keeping them keyed up to the highest pitch of efficiency, getting the last ounce of work from them.

"If you work as hard at the mine," he declared, when he dismissed them that night, "as you have this day, the money they pay you will be well earned."

Some laughed at that.

"Have no fear, Baas," a laborer remarked smilingly. "For no other man would we have worked as we have to-day."

And so, almost dropping from exhaustion, they went to their huts, chuckling, nevertheless, at the way the little Baas had worked them.

## VI

THE Runt sat in a deck chair at the door of his hut. A few paces distant from him, facing the same way, Sixpence squatted on his haunches. The two men were talking over the day's events, and planning how best to apportion their work now that they had to carry on alone.

"There is little we can do, Baas," Sixpence said mournfully, "save to tend the cattle, driving them to water and to the feeding grounds in the morning, and back again at night. One of us must always be on guard lest they stray too far—and there are lions. It is well that the men finished the new stockade to-day." He chuckled softly. "*Wo-we!* But we worked them hard to-day, little Baas."

Hercules smiled in agreement.

"There was nothing I could have done, Sixpence, to keep them?"

"Nothing, Baas," the boss boy answered decidedly. "Even had you given them what they asked, it comes to me that the men at the mine would have offered more and more. No. It was to happen. It has happened. It remains for us to stay and work."

The Runt sighed.

"To do all the things that the little Baas

wants to do will be hard," Sixpence said thoughtfully.

"I did not sigh," the Runt continued, "because I dreaded the days of work that are before me, but, rather, because of the folly of those men who go to work in the mines. It is a poor bargain they have made. To labor in the dark, underground; to lose their strength, to see their spittle of salutation turn from white to red—and all for a few pieces of gold."

Sixpence snorted contemptuously.

"Do not grieve for them, little Baas. They are fools. But I do not think they will stay long at the mine. They will come back."

"But before they come back the crops will be ruined and— But what is *that*, Sixpence?"

Hercules jumped to his feet and pointed to the north, beyond the location of the kraal. A red glow lighted up the darkness of the night, and sparks floated starlike above it.

"It is a bush fire, Baas!"

But the Runt was running swiftly down the trail, and Sixpence, groaning loudly because a white man's day meant no end to work, followed him.

Coming to the kraal, the Runt shouted orders to the men who were lounging about their fires, bidding them to get spades and axes and sacks.

"To what end, little Great Heart?" one asked.

"To fight the fire, fool," the Baas answered roughly. "To put it out before it burns up the crops and stampedes the cattle."

They all laughed at that as if it were a colossal joke.

"Go you and put the fire out, little one," said the man who had first spoken. "It is your *indaba*—not ours."

"Pigs!" the Runt raved. "Said you not that this day you were still my men?"

"The sun has set," the laborer replied. "This is another day."

The black man appealed to his fellows, and they nodded a forceful agreement.

The women came from the huts and crowded together just beyond the circle of light cast by the kraal fire.

"Fools!" the Baas cried. "The fire will burn your crops as well as mine. What will you do then—starve?"

"We are workers at the mine; great wealth is ours," the laborer declared. "Let

the fire burn our crops; we will buy our grain."

"Fools!" the Runt cried again. "If it destroys your kraal and your cattle—what then?"

At the mocking laughter which answered, his anger took possession of him. He stormed, threatened, and implored—all to no purpose. The men listened with an air of polite amusement, but not one stirred himself. Hercules snatched up a large knobkerry, intending to run among them and beat them into activity.

"They are drunk, little Baas," Sixpence said, placing a restraining hand on his master's shoulder. "They are drunk on white man's *puza*. Look!"

He put a square-faced bottle that he had picked up into the Runt's hands. It was empty, but the acrid odor that still emanated from it told the Baas that it had held the vile, poisonous concoction which degraded whites sell to the natives.

Instantly the little man's wrath left him.

"You are not to blame," he said gently.

"The morrow's awakening will be as bitter for you as for me. Come, Sixpence—come with me. Perhaps we two can fight the fire."

He turned away, his shoulders sagging, knowing from past experience with bush fires that the efforts of two men would be fruitless. But his spirit would not permit him to stand idly by and see the labor of months go up in smoke.

"Wait, Baas!" a shrill voice called out. "We come, too!"

## VII

He turned at that and saw that all the women of the kraal—the young *intombis* and the gray-haired *umfazis*—had advanced toward him; and after them trooped the children of the kraal. Some carried old blankets, others hoes and axes, and still others balanced large gourds full of water upon their heads.

"We have fought fire before," the same treble voice continued. "Hurry, little Baas!"

The Runt's eyes sparkled and his shoulders straightened.

"This shall not be forgotten!" he shouted, and led the women and children at a run to the scene of the fire.

As they neared it, Sixpence darted ahead and captured a native who was slinking among the shadows.

"This is the fire setter!" he cried exultantly. He dragged his captive before the Runt. "Shall we throw him to the flames, little Baas?"

Hercules eyed the captive coldly, apparently deaf to the man's frightened appeals for mercy and his whining explanation that he was the dog of the white men at the mine. Is it justice to punish a dog because it obeys the commands of its master?

"Shall I kill him?" Sixpence demanded impatiently, flourishing a knoberry above the prisoner's head.

"No," the Runt replied dully. "The fault is not his. But for this night, at least, he shall change masters. He shall be my dog; he shall fight this fire of his own making—and Mecabe shall see to it that he does not idle."

He pointed to a powerfully built woman, and she eagerly came forward. Grasping the captive by the lobe of his ear, she led him toward the fire line, scolding him volubly.

Meanwhile, the others had spread themselves in a long line between the fire and the crops it threatened, and were working like Amazons possessed. Some cut down grass and bushes, thus robbing the advancing flames of fuel, while others beat the burning herbage with blankets saturated with water.

And when a gourd was emptied, it was passed quickly along a line of girls to the near-by river, and returned brimming full. Silently, efficiently, the women fought the fire in the manner handed down to them through countless generations; their organization was perfect.

The blackness of the night was tinged with the red glare; there was a dull, thundering roar as a breeze fanned the fire to greater fury, and the hiss of the flames, as they licked hungrily at thorn scrub and dry grass, sounded like a mighty wind. The heat was intense; clouds of acrid smoke rolled forward, enveloping the beaters, choking them.

One after another the women discarded their scanty garments, but never slackened their efforts, retreating stubbornly, holding their ground wherever the fire was checked, advancing triumphantly whenever possible. Sweat streamed from naked bodies, and the children passed up and down the line, splashing water from the gourds on the heat-parched workers.

Twice Mecabe had to rescue her prisoner when, overcome by smoke and his violent labor, he collapsed in the path of the advancing flames.

"He is a weakling," she shouted shrilly to the Runt. "Better let him die, little Baas!"

He shook his head.

"The mines have weakened him, as they will weaken your men," Hercules said. "Let him live, and make him work—that is the greater punishment."

The night wore on, but the women were holding their own; the forward advance of the fire was checked. But not yet could the workers rest, and—having passed the stage of physical exhaustion—they were now striving like automatons.

Hours passed, and soft white light appeared on the eastern horizon, marking the place where the sun would rise. Occasionally, gusts of smoke partly hid it from view, giving it a ghostly appearance.

"Day comes!" the Runt exclaimed.

"But the danger is not yet past."

"Day does not come yet, little Baas," Sixpence replied, "and the fire is nearly beaten. Before day comes, it will be finished. Even now there is nothing to fear. The women work hard because the habit is upon them."

As he spoke, the light began to shrink and fade.

"The smoke grows thicker!" the Baas cried. "Tell the women to work harder before the flames come again."

Sixpence laughed.

"There is no need, little Baas," he explained. "The light goes. It is not the smoke which hides it. See! Now it has entirely gone."

Darkness—a thicker, deeper darkness—once again overspread the earth.

A little time passed, and then the east again glowed with a light which brightened swiftly.

"This is the real dawn," Sixpence said. "The other is sent by the Great Spirit to cheer the watchers of the night, to tell them that their labor is nearing an end."

Dull gray clouds scurried across the sky, fleeing from the rising sun, and all the east became ablaze with color—purple, lavender, crimson, gold, and blue commingling.

Gradually the colors changed to one hue, until, when the sun shot above the horizon, all the sky was painted a brilliant, electric blue.



"That is good," the Runt said softly, and shaded his eyes from the glory of the sun.

## VIII

HE looked at his faithful band of workers. Before them was the charred and smoking veldt, behind them the crops they had saved.

"That is good," Hercules said again.

One by one, the women reclad themselves in the scanty clothing they had discarded. Mecabe, withdrawing somewhat from the first line of defense, took her prisoner with her to where a number of her dark-skinned sisters squatted on their haunches, taking counsel together.

The Runt, sitting on a near-by ant hill, drank deeply from a gourd full of water. Then he closed his eyes and leaned back in happy relaxation.

A sudden commotion among the women caused him to leap to his feet. They had released the fire-setter, and were pursuing him with hard, bitter taunts and a shower of stones thrown with surprising accuracy.

They had left only one way of escape open for him, and that was across the wide belt of burned veldt. Hilarious laughter greeted his frenzied caperings as the hot ashes seared the soles of his naked feet.

When the tortured man vanished into the bush beyond, the Runt started the return journey to his homestead, followed by the women.

On the way they met the men who were journeying to the mine. Although the Baas pretended not to see them or to hear their shamefaced greetings, the women both saw and heard. The abuse they had only recently shouted at the fire-setter was as nothing compared to the jeering taunts they hurled at their own men-folk.

At the entrance to the stockade which surrounded the kraal, the Runt halted to thank the women for the help they had given him. They refused to listen, and one shouted:

"Hark now to the words of Mecabe, little Great Heart! She speaks for us all."

They pushed their spokeswoman to the fore.

"It is little I should say," Mecabe began, "for we are all tired, and our bellies are empty. Yet, heed this, little Baas: although our men-folk have forgotten, we have not. We remember all the things you have done for us.

"In the time of famine, you fed us; when the spotted fever was abroad, you healed us; our crops flourish, and our cattle's increase has been great. And, because we are women, we understand many things which are as the night's shadows to our men-folk.

"We know that this place of yours is to you as an only child. Aye, you labored heavily and brought it forth. And so, because we, too, have known the pains of labor, we will not stand idly by and see your only child taken from you.

"We will hoe your crops and tend your cattle. All that those men of ours were accustomed to do, we will do—aye, and do it better. That is all.

"Now we will go and eat. Later, before the sun rises much higher, we will come to you so that the work may be properly apportioned. Come, my sisters."

Mecabe and those with her passed into the kraal, leaving Hercules and Sixpence alone.

"My Gord!" the Runt muttered soberly. "An' hif that don't trump Bailey's trick, I'll eat my 'at."

He laughed happily.

"Hif the Pioneer boys 'ear o' hit they'll pull my leg no end. Me 'avin' a lot o' females workin' fer me! But they've saved my land. Gord bless 'em!"

He broke off suddenly and went on to his hut, whistling cheerily, his eyes shining, his shoulders thrown back, his step springy.

## IX

THE days passed swiftly, and work went on apace at the Runt's farm. In all respects, the women of the kraal were better farm laborers than the men had been. The tending of crops was their province, as it always had been from the beginning of time.

Relieved of the necessity of continuous supervision of his workers, the Runt, aided by Sixpence, commenced to dig the foundations of the home he had always planned to build. It would be a house of stone, quarried on his farm, timbered with beams hewed from his trees, carpeted with the skins of wild beasts he had slain.

It would have a multitude of windows, each one yielding a wonderfully beautiful view of the surrounding country. In the Runt's home—as he planned it—there would be no need of framed pictures.

Thus occupied, the little man forgot the

devil and all his works, forgot Bailey and that fat man's slender daughter, forgot the gold hunger of the men who coveted his land, forgot everything but the joy of creation and possession, until—

One day at sunset a native runner brought him mail from the township of Salisbury, fifty miles away. It consisted of a long, legal-looking envelope, stamped with the crest of the British South Africa Company; and the flimsy newspaper which was Salisbury's civic pride.

The Runt opened the newspaper and endeavored to interest himself in the banal reports printed in the company-owned sheet. Its leading editorial dealt with the visit to Salisbury of the Right Honorable Cecil J. Rhodes, and was couched in the most sycophantic terms.

"Ell!" Hercules muttered. "I bet 'e 'ates all this stuff worse nor poison. I'd like to 'ave a tork wiv 'im, though. I bet 'e'd hunderstand me. Me an' 'im—we're both dreamers."

He laughed self-consciously, picked up the envelope and scrutinized it thoughtfully for a moment.

"Maybe hit's a hinvitation to dinner wiv Rhodes 'imself," he said with a chuckle.

Still chuckling, he slit open the envelope with a stubby forefinger, and took out the letter it contained.

As he read, the chuckles gave way to a gasp of astonishment, a puzzled look of fear came into his blue eyes, the color left his face, his hands shook.

"My Gord!" he exclaimed weakly, and passed the back of his hand across his eyes. "This is some o' that slimy Bailey's doin's. He tries to buy me hout, to burn me hout, an' 'e takes all my men laborers away, 'op-in' to force me to sell. An' w'en all them tricks fail, 'e does this!"

He looked at the letter again. It read:

DEAR SIR:

Acting on instructions, we have carefully examined your title to the land now being farmed by you. We find that, inasmuch as your enlistment in the Pioneer Column was irregular, you have no right to the land grant made to bona fide pioneers.

Following precedent in this matter, we were obliged to put your holding up for public auction, and have to report that it was purchased by Mr. H. Bailey.

Doubtless you will be able to make arrangements with Mr. Bailey for the purchase of your crops when he arrives to take possession. Mr. Bailey has announced that he is prepared to pay you a generous sum for all improvements you have made during your period of occupancy.

We hope that you will decide to take up farm land elsewhere. Should you so decide—

But the Runt could read no further.

He swore a bitter, biting, mighty oath, and sat motionless until the sun set, until darkness came, until the moon came up and made all light again, staring with sorrow-glazed eyes into a cheerless future.

The moon was high when the Runt suddenly shouted:

"Sixpence!"

The native came running.

"Yes, little Baas?"

"Saddle the horse. I ride to Salisbury."

"Yes, little Baas. But first you will eat. It is late, and—"

"You talk too much, Sixpence. Go quickly."

The boss boy, too wise to question further, hastened to the stable shed. A few minutes later he brought the horse up to where his master was pacing restlessly to and fro. Sixpence gave the little man a leg up, still expostulating.

But the Runt was deaf to it all. Sitting dazedly in the saddle, he dug in his spurs and rode awkwardly away.

Sixpence gazed wonderingly after him, thinking that all white men are a little mad. Picking up the Runt's writing pad—which contained so many of the little man's dreams and the drafts of his will—he entered the sleeping hut and placed it carefully on the table beside the bed.

Then he went into the scoff hut and gorged himself on the food he had prepared for his master and which had been spurned.

Truly, thought Sixpence again, all white men are more than a little mad.

## X

THE sun was two hours above the horizon when the Runt—tired, dust-covered, his eyes heavy for lack of sleep—came to the settlement of Salisbury.

At its outskirts he met the Baileys, father and daughter, and a number of men, riding leisurely along the road. Behind them were two large trek wagons.

He reined his sweating horse to one side to let them pass, scowling at Bailey's derisive grin. One of the riders looked at Hercules pityingly, and said: "Hard luck, Runt. It's a damned shame!"

The little man made no reply, but spurred his horse, and was startled to discover that it could still canter. Coming to

the galvanized tin-roofed building labeled the Palace Hotel, the Runt dismounted and walked stiffly into the bar.

There he was at once surrounded by a number of men who had known him in the Pioneer Column. They joined him in cursing the Chartered Company and all its ways. In particular they cursed Bailey—and drank—and cursed again.

"But hit 'll be hall right," the Runt announced pompously, after he had had four whiskies. "Hi'm going to see Rhodes. 'E'll put things straight."

He staggered toward the door, but got no farther than a large settee. The Runt was never a drinking man, and the drinks he had on an empty stomach, after his all-night ride, were paralyzing. Two of the men picked him up, carried him to a bedroom, and left him to sleep off his indiscretion. One of them took away the snoring man's revolver, and hid it so successfully that it could not be found when they all were sober again.

It was nearly noon of the following day when Hercules finally made his way to Cecil Rhodes's headquarters.

"No," the big man's secretary told him, "Mr. Rhodes is not in town. I do not know when he will be back. I am not at liberty to tell where he is. He's gone away for a rest. He was worn out. During the few days he was here everybody came to tell him their troubles—and he got tired of hearing hard luck stories and writing out checks. Yes, I'll tell him about you as soon as he gets back, and try to arrange an interview. Good morning."

For three days the Runt remained in Salisbury, keeping very much to himself, drinking nothing stronger than water, and rarely leaving his room except to go to the big man's headquarters to see if there was any news. On the evening of the third day the secretary greeted him with a cheerful smile.

"I've told Mr. Rhodes all about you, M. Robinson," he announced, "and he's looked into your case very carefully. He says, however, that there's nothing he can do. The company, in selling the land at auction, has acted entirely within its rights. And Mr. Bailey, in buying the land—"

"Oh, 'ell!" the Runt exclaimed. "Don't tork to me abart that stinkin' hyena, or abart the company. Let me 'ave a tork wiv Rhodes. I'll make 'im see fings the way 'e ort to see 'em."

"Mr. Rhodes is not seeing any one," the secretary declared coldly, and moved his big bulk so as to balk the Runt's attempt to make his way to a door leading to an inner room. He continued severely:

"Mr. Rhodes requested me to tell you that you acted like a dog in the manger in refusing to permit your gold claim to be worked. He says that your attitude holds up the country's progress. Besides that, you stupidly refused a good offer for your farm. Mr. Rhodes cannot see that he should interfere. You have no right to the land, you know."

"Right to the land!" Hercules cried hoarsely. "I'd like to know 'oo 'as a better right—the man 'oo paid fer hit wiv a few slimy quid, or me as put my body an' 'eart an' soul hinto hit? You arsk Cecil Rhodes that! An' you tell 'im that gold won't make this country wot 'e wants hit to be, but land will wiv the crops that me, an' blokes like me, grows on hit. An' you tell Cecil Rhodes that yer can't raise kids on gold, but yer can on land. See wot I mean? An' you tell 'im that hyenas like Bailey—"

"It's no use talking that way," the secretary interrupted wearily. "I've already told you that Mr. Rhodes has gone very carefully into the matter, and has reached his decision. There doesn't seem anything more to say, except that Mr. Rhodes hopes that this will reimburse you for the loss of your farm."

*This* was a check for an amount twice that which had been offered by Bailey for the farm.

"That's all," the secretary said, and motioned toward the door.

Hercules Robinson did not move.

"No, hit ain't all," he declared slowly, and tore the check into small pieces, which he put down on the secretary's desk. "'Ere—you give that back to Cecil Rhodes; I don't want hit. 'E says hevery man 'as 'is price, don't 'e? Well, my price ain't money. My price is land. An' not hany old land, but *my* land, the land I've worked an' sweated an' dreamed dreams hover. You tell Cecil Rhodes that, will yer?"

The Runt turned and almost ran from the room, slamming the door behind him.

Coincident with the little man's departure, the door leading into the inner room opened and Sylvia Bailey emerged. With her was a tall, powerful-looking man, a little under six feet in height. There was

a piercing light in his steel-blue eyes, and his curly hair was tinged with gray; he had a striking resemblance to the Roman Cæsars.

The secretary arose from his chair and pointed to the destroyed check.

"He wouldn't take it, Mr. Rhodes," he explained.

The big man nodded, and stuck his thumbs inside his belt.

"M-m-m-m!" he whined, and, turning, walked up and down the room with quick, short steps, his toes turned in so much that he appeared almost to tread upon his own feet.

He halted presently before a large map of South Africa which hung on the wall.

"M-m-m! He helped to make my dream come true," he said slowly, and placed his big hand on the map. "He helped to paint that red. And he's a dreamer of dreams, too. Well—I think we'll have to visit this dreamer's farm, eh, Miss Bailey?"

His voice ended in a falsetto squeak.

The girl nodded happily.

"And we'll start now," Cecil Rhodes continued. He turned to his secretary. "Have the mules harnessed to the buckboard at once."

## XI

ALMOST maddened with rage at the way he had been treated by the great man who, he had hoped, would right his wrongs, the Runt hurried back to the hotel. He paid his bill, and a few minutes later went galloping out of town, back to the farm that was no longer his.

As he rode, he planned impossible deeds of vengeance upon the man who had robbed him, and on the society which made such a robbery legal.

He would kill Bailey, his daughter, and the men who were with them; one by one he would ambush them and shoot them with as little compunction as he would show to a hyena. He would become a white Kafir; he would turn renegade, and lead the natives in a revolt against the whites.

He rode on and on, staring dumbly ahead, letting the reins fall on his horse's neck. When the animal stopped at a water hole, Hercules dismounted and drank, then sat down on a near-by rock, waiting for the horse to quench its thirst.

His hand closed on the shaft of a knob-kerry which some native had discarded,

and when he mounted he took the club-like weapon with him. As he went on again, he struck fiercely at the bushes that bordered the road, once hitting a stout overhanging branch of a tree. He laughed at the jar which numbed his arm from elbow to wrist.

"If that 'ad been Bailey's 'ead," he muttered, "it 'd 'ave cracked like a heggshell."

The sun set, and darkness fell. The horse came to a stop and whinnied softly. But now the Runt was consumed with desire to get back to his place with all possible speed, to surprise the usurpers, to hear Bailey's head smash like a rotten egg.

He drove in his spurs, and the horse, snorting in protest, trotted on. The Runt gave it no guidance; he trusted to the beast's surefootedness and the instinct which would keep it to the road.

Hours passed; the bush was enveloped in darkness. Not a star was visible. Hercules sensed, rather than saw, the heavy clouds that gathered overhead.

In the distance sounded low mutterings of thunder. Flashes of lightning streaked across the sky; the peals of thunder came nearer.

A bolt, blinding the rider in its intense brilliance, shot to earth and ran among the rocks, crackling and hissing just in front of the horse. The animal reared and swerved violently, throwing Hercules onto the rocks with stunning force. Then, neighing in fear, it galloped swiftly away.

After a little while the Runt moaned and sat up, swaying back and forth, seeking to orient himself. Blood was streaming from a cut on his head. Presently, his strength having somewhat returned, he arose and stumbled on weakly, calling to his horse.

The electric disturbances ceased; the bush was no longer illumined by flashes of lightning. Rumbings of thunder came from a great distance, then ceased altogether. But the clouds still covered the stars, the darkness was absolute.

He imagined that something menacing had brushed against his leg. He struck at it viciously with the knob-kerry, which he had clung to tenaciously. Missing, the force he had put into the blow almost overbalanced him, and he sprawled against the trunk of a tree.

The little man decided to wait there until daybreak, fearing that he would lose himself completely if he ventured to go on



in the darkness. He sat down on the ground and gave himself up to his misery.

After a little while he became aware of a nauseating stench and heard a hyena's twittering call. He arose to his feet, and his hold on the knobkerry tightened.

As he did so, a darker shadow rushed at him out of the night's darkness. He lunged at it, and laughed aloud as the club landed on something soft and alive.

The hyena sprang back out of range of the flailing knobkerry; then it crept stealthily forward again. The Runt could hear its hungry snuffles, and knew that the brute was emboldened by the smell of human blood.

"Blast yer!" he cried, as he backed up against the tree trunk, swinging the knobkerry before him. "Ye're just like that slimy cur, Bailey. Yer got a hunfair advantage o' me. Yer can see—an' I can't. Yer'd try to do me down in the dark, would yer? Well, take that, an' that, an' that, Mr. Bailey!"

But not one of the three blows landed. The hyena had leaped back out of range.

For an hour the strange struggle continued. Had it not been for the fact that the Runt's imagination had clothed the beast with Bailey's personality, it is doubtful if the little man could have held out so long. His rage against the man who had robbed him filled him with a berserk fury, and he wielded his weapon so cunningly that several times the blows landed, and the hyena howled in pain.

But Hercules was tiring fast. The time was approaching when he would no longer be able to keep the ravenous beast at bay.

Then the low rumbling grunt of a lion sounded very near. A zebra barked, neighed in terror, and at once screamed in agony.

All was silence now, save for the rending of flesh and the cracking of bones as the king of beasts commenced its feast.

Suddenly the Runt was conscious that the hyena had left him. It had gone to take up its station near the kill, so that it would be first on hand when the rising sun warned the mighty lion away to its lair.

## XII

WHEN the sun came up, the Runt saw that he was a long distance from his farm. He hastened on, but it was nearly noon when he saw Sixpence coming toward him, leading the horse.

"It is time you came, little Baas," the native said gravely, after assuring himself that the white man was not badly hurt.

"Yes?" the Runt questioned, as he climbed into the saddle.

"Yes, little Baas. Strange white men have come to your place. One, the fat man who was here before the bush fire, says the place now is his, and at his orders those men have dug holes in the ground and have blown up rocks."

The Baas's eyes blazed.

"Hyenas!" he muttered. "Two-legged hyenas!"

"What will you do?" Sixpence asked. "There are many of the beasts!"

The Runt did not answer, but spurred forward, and turned presently into a trail which led to his homestead. On topping the brow of the hill he saw that his sleeping hut had been demolished, and that mining operations had already commenced on the ground where it had stood.

Bailey, surrounded by a number of miners, a smile of triumph on his face, was examining a piece of quartz, turning it over and over in his hands.

With a sob of rage, Hercules leaped from his horse, and, knobkerry upraised, rushed at the men.

"Get hoff my land, blast yer!" he yelled. "Get hoff, yer stinkin' hyenas!"

They turned quickly to face him. Bailey, getting behind two tall miners, fumbled with the butt of his revolver.

"Take it easy, Runt," one of the miners advised. "It's no good acting that way. Keep your head, and maybe Mr. Bailey—"

But the little man heard nothing. Red specks floated before his eyes. He was possessed with an insane desire to smash Bailey's head.

The men gave way before his maddened rush, dodging the flail-like blows of the knobkerry.

Bailey turned to run, drawing his revolver as he fled.

Some one stuck out a pole, tripping the Runt, and before he could arise, several miners flung themselves upon him, holding him fast. Bailey turned again, and aimed his revolver at the Runt's head.

"None of that!" a big Cornishman growled, knocking up the weapon just as Bailey pulled the trigger. "None of that, unless you want to be strung up!"

Bailey laughed in nervous relief at the

frustrated shot, and glared contemptuously at the miner.

"Better truss the fool up," he said, vindictively, to the men who were holding the Runt. "He's mad. I think he'd have killed me if he'd got to me."

"Good riddance, too," muttered one of the men. "But we'll tie him up, more for his sake than yours, though. He's too good a man to be hanged for murder."

### XIII

THEY picked up the Runt, spoke soothingly to him, and carried him into one of the huts.

Bailey stared after them, nervously biting his under lip. A few minutes later a Cape cart, drawn by six mules, came up the hill not far from where he was standing. He walked over to it and stared in amazement, first at his daughter, and then at Cecil Rhodes.

"M-m-m!" the great man began, his eyes dancing with excitement. "You don't seem very glad to see us, Bailey."

"It's not that, Mr. Rhodes," Bailey hastily apologized. "Only your visit is a little unexpected—and a most distressing thing has just happened."

"Yes?" Rhodes questioned in an excited squeak. "What?"

"The man Robinson, who illegally occupied this land, rode up here stark, raving mad—and tried to kill me."

"You didn't hurt him, I hope?" Sylvia Bailey demanded.

"No," Bailey replied, and glanced wonderingly at his daughter.

"Oh, I am so glad, father! We heard a shot. Where is he now?"

"My men are standing guard over him in that hut there. But what are you doing with Mr. Rhodes, Sylvia? I hope he's made you see sense in this matter of working the reef on this property."

"Yes," she replied smilingly. "I think he has, father."

"M-m-m!" Rhodes broke in. "How much did you pay for this land, Bailey?"

"Two hundred pounds. It was a forced sale, so I got it dirt cheap." He winked slyly.

"But you're not going to farm it, eh, Bailey?"

The fat man laughed.

"Hardly. There's a reef here; not a rich one, but enough for us to catch the speculators on 'Change. I think—"

He stopped short. Apparently, Cecil Rhodes was not interested in what he was saying. The great man was writing out a check.

"M-m-m! You have the title deeds with you, Bailey?" he inquired.

Bailey took them from the breast pocket of his coat.

"Well, Bailey, here's a check for three hundred pounds. That 'll give you a little profit on the transaction. Now indorse those deeds over to Hercules Robinson, and I can start back to Salisbury. They'll never forgive me if I miss to-morrow night's banquet. Hurry! What are you waiting for?"

"But I don't want to sell, Mr. Rhodes," the amazed man replied. "I have no intention of selling."

Rhodes shook his head impatiently.

"But you will sell, Bailey. I want men like Robinson in this country of mine."

Bailey laughed again.

"Once we've got the mine working, a lot of new settlers 'll come in," he declared. "Nothing like a new strike to bring in the settlers. If you want Robinson on a farm, buy him one somewhere else. Get up a fund for him—I'll donate a guinea!"

"I'm afraid you don't understand, Bailey," Rhodes remarked, "and we're wasting time. I want this farm for Robinson. It's really his. Man, haven't you seen all that he's done since he's been here? Haven't you found out what the natives about here think of him? But, never mind; what you've found out about him doesn't matter. What I've found out does. Now indorse those title deeds!"

"I'm not going to sell, Mr. Rhodes," Bailey announced stubbornly, "and that's final."

"Oh, father!" the girl cried.

Rhodes patted her comfortingly on the arm.

"Look here, Bailey," he said, his eyes narrowing. "If you won't sell, you won't—and that's all there is to it. Legally, the land is yours. However"—his voice became shrill—"if you won't sell, I'll unload all the stock I hold in the Phoenix Mine. That's your principal source of income, isn't it? I thought so. Well?"

"You wouldn't do that, Mr. Rhodes, just for the sake of a whim. You'd ruin me and—"

"And a lot of men like you. Yes, I know. But that wouldn't matter."

"And it would affect all your holdings, Mr. Rhodes, and hurt your credit everywhere. You wouldn't do it."

"Wouldn't I? Try me."

The two men glared at each other, and presently Bailey looked uneasily away.

"Well?" Rhodes questioned.

Bailey waved his hands in a gesture of surrender.

#### XIV

A FEW minutes later Sylvia Bailey, the title deeds clasped in her hands, entered the hut where the Runt had been carried. She motioned the men who stood guard over him to go outside, and, stooping down, swiftly untied his bonds. The little man glared at her fiercely.

"It's all right now, Mr. Robinson," the girl said softly. "The land is yours now, and no one can take it away from you. Mr. Rhodes bought the land back from my father for you."

He stared at her, not daring to believe the evidence of his ears.

"Yer ain't foolin' me, are yer, miss?" he asked. "You've got the land an' yer beautiful view. Wot more do yer want?"

"I'm not joking—and I haven't got the

view. Look at the deeds!" She unrolled the parchment and pointed to her father's indorsement.

Gradually comprehension came to the Runt, and a smile came into his eyes.

"But I don't hunderstand, quite," he murmured. "I thought yer wanted the place. I thought that hif hit 'adn't been fer you, yer father'd never 'ave thought o' tryin' to buy me hout."

"I was selfish," she confessed frankly. "I saw how beautiful the place was, and I was sure you couldn't appreciate it. I thought that you'd be more than willing to sell for a good price. But when I found that father had bought the farm just to become richer, I began to suspect. Then I talked to Sixpence, and read your will—and I saw how wrong I had been. I rode back to Salisbury and told Mr. Rhodes all about it. We were listening that day when you talked to his secretary. You understand it all now, don't you?"

"Yes, miss," the Runt replied huskily. "I hunderstand. Gord bless yer!"

His eyes misted with joy. His land had been returned to him, to dream and plan over; to work and sweat over in order that those dreams and plans might come true.

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#### AT EVENING

WHEN drift the snows of years, let tears  
For former days be missing,  
While banished be the brood of fears  
That coiled about me, hissing:  
May the gray dawn and torrid noon  
Forgotten be in glory  
Of embered sunset, stars and moon  
That crown life's wondrous story.

When like a ghost the twilight moves  
Across the fields of clover,  
And wistful winds breathe little loves  
Of gallant days and over,  
May the calm night of somber shade  
Invest with pride my spirit—  
That in the morning was afraid—  
To walk the night, nor fear it.

When I am old, let heart and mind  
Aligned, march on together,  
With no despair nor backward look  
To storms or sunny weather;  
What's done is done—nor e'er shall stir  
The graves of joy or sorrow—  
Let me not brood of things that were,  
But face with faith to-morrow.

Olin Lyman

# A Judgment in Granite

ON THE LONELY MOORLAND OF DEVON A STURDY AMERICAN  
ENCOUNTERS A FELLOW COUNTRYMAN WHO  
MAKES THE STONE AGE LIVE AGAIN

By Richard Howells Watkins

ENVELOPED in a mist that reduced his vision to a circle of no more than thirty feet, Donald Whiddon trudged steadily over the wet, resilient turf of Dartmoor.

On his trip from his ship in Plymouth Sound to Tavistock, the gentle sunlight of an English October had followed him. But the mist of the moorland had come down soon after he had begun his tramp from the quaint old Devonshire town across the high, treeless waste that is fertile England's most desolate and most imposing region.

Now he was lost, as far lost, that is, as a sailor equipped with compass, map, and a good knowledge of dead reckoning could be. He was rather tired, too. The mate of an American tramp steamer has few opportunities to stretch his legs, save on the short promenade from lee to weather wing of the bridge.

But neither his doubtful position nor his fatigue mattered to Whiddon. Thanks to a broken propeller shaft and a decent captain, he was on leave and embarked on a venture that had captured his imagination as a boy.

For here he was, for the first time in his life, on the great, ancient moor that had been the home of his ancestors until the sea had called his grandfather down to an American clipper ship that lay in the very waters where now his own vessel swung to anchor.

It was the tales told by that blue-eyed, sturdy man of Devon that had brought his grandson to Dartmoor. Tales they were of vast, rolling uplands whose summits were dominated by great granite tors, peaks of rock that had thrust themselves toward the sky while England still seethed with volcanoes.

And the slopes below them were strewn with the granite debris split free by the power of storm, frost, and the ages. Beneath the scanty soil itself was more granite, and in some places it formed huge cups wherein the mist and the rain descended to form treacherous bogs from which no man ever came out, alive or dead.

Then, too, there were stories of an unknown race which lived among the tors when weapons and huts and graves were all of stone. This race had vanished, but, like the volcanoes of another age, it had left its traces on the moor.

Scattered over the high, bare land were ruined hut circles, great standing stones called menhirs, clapper bridges, pounds for the defense of man and animal, cairns, barrows, cromlechs and cistvaens for the dead, and long rows of stone that no man knew the reason for, although many guessed.

To Donald Whiddon, born in a new land whose earliest race of red men still survived in deteriorated and unromantic fragments, all this prehistoric mystery appealed from the enticing distance of three thousand miles. He had followed his grandfather, and his father, down to the sea, privately resolving that one day he would see this moorland. Now, in the very midst of a remote region of stone, turf, and mist, he paused to light his pipe and consider his course.

The vapor that had come so swiftly out of the southwest thinned now and again, and then thickened, but at no time did it lift sufficiently to disclose to Don Whiddon's keen eyes more than a rolling slope thickly covered with turf and heather, save where gorse and bracken formed clumps, or granite boulders reared their solid bulk.

"This vapor is of no account," Don



mused, as he drew a few experimental puffs of his pipe and raised his face to the breeze. "There's too much wind to have it hold long, but that's not saying it will not come down on me again."

## II

His meditations came to a sudden end, as a clank of metal sounded behind him. Whirling, he stared with startled eyes at a great figure that had emerged with silent tread out of the fog.

The man in the mist was tall, and loomed larger in the vapor than his actual height, but what impressed the mate most in that first instant was his huge breadth of shoulder and the length and bigness of his arms. Tucked under one of these, supported by the broad forearm, were a spade and a crowbar.

Hardly had Whiddon time to note all this when the stranger took another step, and the sailor found a wide, flat face, as hard and expressionless as the granite boulders roundabout, scowling at him. The man's under jaw, massive and prognathous, stretched out even farther than nature had designed, as small black eyes, deep set and unwinking, focused upon Whiddon.

For a moment neither man spoke. The giant continued to probe Don's eyes with a gaze that had something forbidding and ruthless in it, and at the same time was openly contemptuous.

"What 're ya doin' on the moor here?" the burly one demanded.

His voice sounded in the sailor's ears as unexpectedly as his bulk had loomed before his eyes. For here, in the heart of Dartmoor, was a man speaking with an accent as American as Don Whiddon's own, and considerably rougher.

"I'm walking," Whiddon replied rather curtly. "Can you tell me how far I am from the road to Princetown?"

"Huh!" the ill-featured giant grunted. "'Nuther American, I reckon. Think I'm a nurse or a traffic cop?"

First Officer Donald Whiddon straightened his shoulders a bit more, and his eyes shot sparks as they fixed themselves on the lowering face of the larger man.

"I don't think you're a traffic cop," he said, his voice so steady it was almost toneless. "You're big enough to be, my man, but much too ugly and sullen."

The crowbar and spade under the giant's

arm clanked angrily as he shifted his grip, and his fierce eyes seemed to recede into his head. He made a sound in his throat like the growl of a dog.

"Don't get too gay, fella," he warned. "I c'u'd break ya in two an' never sprain a finger doin' it."

"I wouldn't advise you to try it," Whiddon retorted stoutly. He did not move an inch, but as his eye took in the huge proportions of the man before him, he admitted in his heart that what the giant said was probably true.

He himself, although no more than average in weight and height, had handled some hard customers. But like all men who have been through many a mill, he knew there was a limit to what courage can do against brute strength and a body as impregnable to hurt as this great savage's appeared.

The man laughed jeeringly. Through the white curtain around them came a sound so faint as to be indistinguishable. The fellow instantly cocked his ears; then nodded imperatively down the hillside.

"Straight down, you," he rumbled. "Ya'll hit th' road in a coupla hundred yards. An' stay on it, see? You blasted tourists oughta keep out o' a place like this."

He thrust his malignant countenance forward. Whiddon's hands involuntarily clenched, but before he could bring them up the giant had side-stepped him and was plunging through the vapor with a truculent swing of his shoulders.

Don Whiddon, boiling with rage, looked after his dimming figure. The man was striding along as easily as if he were on a New York pavement, and it was plain to see that the mist had put no doubt in his mind as to where he was heading.

Like his sudden appearance, there was something sinister about his departure, and something covert, mysterious, too.

"Didn't expect to meet that kind of cattle here on Dartmoor," Don told himself wrathfully. "But he seemed to be at home. I'll bet my ticket he's as tough a brute as any of the old stone men, and twice as venomous."

Certainly the man was close to the brute; great in strength; stunted in mind; moving across the moor by instinct rather than reason.

Whiddon turned, and with an effort brought himself back to a consideration of

the slope in front of him. He had for some time been steering a course due east, with a little northing in it, to take him clear of the road he had spoken of, which climbed from Tavistock to Princetown, the highest town in England.

He had no wish to travel a road, even a deserted moor road, when the heath lay bare and free to his feet.

"And when I ask that thug where the road is to check my bearings, he orders me back onto it!" he mused indignantly. "Me—a blood son of Dartmoor, and he—a son of God knows what!"

He swung around and emphatically turned his back on the direction of the road. Apparently, if his threatening informant had not been lying, he had made a bit too much southing to keep well away from the highway.

He was inclined to believe from his own reckoning that the giant had told the truth. Recently he had forded a stream, fast running and clear in its granite bed, and now he was quite certain that the slope of its banks had inclined his feet slightly to the southward.

He recalled that he had a few moments before heard a rumble and a stamp, as of wheels and hoofs on a wooden bridge. The sound, the first that had reached his alert ears for nearly an hour, indicated that the road was not far away.

Whiddon clapped his compass on the map and oriented it. Then he looked as far northward as the gray-white veil permitted. The slope was upward in that direction, and the granite boulders seemed thicker.

"That's what they call a clitter—all those rocks—and that means there's a tor dead ahead," he mused. "It's worth a look to a man that's not going anywhere in particular."

He glanced at his watch. It was not yet four—plenty of time for a man to make a detour of a mile or two, and still have light to make Princetown or find a bed in a roadside cottage, if cottages there were.

He put away his map, relit his pipe, and, with another squint at the compass, bore northward up the slope. It gave him a distinct inward satisfaction thus to disregard the giant's insulting direction to stay on the road.

The ground grew wetter as he moved higher. His feet sank deeper, with a squashing sound, between hummocks of

bog grass, and here and there he made detours. But nowhere did he see the brilliant green tint of the surface that is the sign of "feather beds" or "Quakers," as Dartmoor folk have named the mires.

The granite *débris* increased. Sometimes his feet, in half a dozen paces, trod firm ground, or wet, clinging bog and outcroppings of granite.

"Queer country," he told himself, as he found ever increasing wetness the farther he left the lowlands behind. "If this mist would just— Ah!"

### III

He stopped dead, as he heard a succession of thudding blows ahead, and the next instant saw a flash of brown against the green turf. A sturdy, shaggy pony, followed closely by a tiny, long-legged foal, appeared suddenly within the region of visibility, stopped to snort indignantly at the man, then wheeled and dashed madly away.

"Not used to company," Donald decided. "Well, if it's not too mushy for them ahead, I reckon it's all right for me."

He pressed on, with more confidence, for perhaps a hundred yards. Then, as quickly as if a curtain had been whisked from before his eyes, the mist vanished, and he found himself standing in the very shadow of a vast mass of stone.

The bulk that reared itself abruptly in front of him was more solid than any erection of man, but it was split and wrinkled, hollowed and smoothed, by the changing weather of geological ages. From below, it appeared like the rock-rimmed rampart of an extinct volcano.

Whiddon gazed upward at it in silence. The unexpectedness of the revelation was in itself startling, and the impressive grandeur of the tor left him without words. But he knew now that his grandfather had spoken truth; this was a country which might well pull a man's heart to it from half the world away.

"I'll climb that," he decided, and then turned to look down the hill.

The vapor was still rolling down the incline, disclosing, as it retreated, the rock-strewn wilderness over which he had passed. Now he could see the upper reaches of the stream he had forded; soon—

He reached quickly for his binoculars. The mist, clearing from a lower stretch of

the hillside, had revealed life among the silent, immutable clutter of shattered granite.

His glasses corroborated his eyes. There, among the rocks, were two men. One was the giant of the mist.

As he focused the lenses, Whiddon made out that the other was a thin little old gentleman, with a paper-white face, who was passing among the splintered boulders at a sort of half trot, eagerly turning his head this way and that. He resembled a lean old terrier of a stunted species, nervously quartering the ground for a lost scent.

"Funny," Whiddon muttered, as he followed his rangings. The man was soberly clad in a dark business suit and a black felt hat. Certainly that was no costume in which to go hunting.

As he watched, the searcher on the moor suddenly glanced up, as if he noticed for the first time that the mist had been dispelled. Instantly, then, he gave over his roundabout movements, to hurry down the slope toward his unlovely companion.

Whiddon's glasses, trained upon this fellow, discovered him sitting, with his long thick arms flung over his knees, on top of a flat rock. The careless ease of his position hinted again of great physical power and swift coordination.

The old man, with another glance at the mist, which was now well past them, gesticulated with nervous vigor toward the lower slope. For an instant the other took no notice; then, effortlessly, and with a deliberation that seemed somehow to mock the little one's alarm, he slid from his seat and crouched beside it.

At the same time the old man dropped to the ground beside a boulder. Both men were down under cover before the mist had swept past the moor road below.

From east to west, as far as the rolling country permitted Whiddon's vision to go, the road was bare. The giant's old companion raised his head cautiously to scan it intently.

Then, with a signal to his powerful ally, he made his way downward among the rocks, crouching, and stumbling occasionally as his eyes remained too steadily fixed upon the winding wagon track. The hulking stalwart followed much less furtively, paying little attention to the occasional apprehensive gestures of the nervous old man.

Straight down the hillside they went, and then the old man made an excited rush

across the road and collapsed, apparently exhausted, on a boulder in full view of any chance passer-by. Behind him the big man slouched leisurely. Legs apart, he paused to light a cigarette; then sank upon another boulder and relaxed, puffing away indolently.

"They're afraid of being seen on one side of the road and not on the other," Donald Whiddon mused, perplexedly. "What's that for? There are no fences and trespass notices here. And what was that fussy old chap looking for? They're a queer couple, and they're acting queerer yet."

A certain regularity of position among the rocks across the road aroused his interest. He squinted through his glasses. Then, suddenly, there leaped into his perception the answer. Those tumbling, splintered granite fragments, even the ones the two men sat upon, were ranged in rough, uneven circles on the moor.

"Hut circles!" Whiddon exclaimed mentally. "That must be a stone age village they're in over there!"

Eagerly he studied the ruined remains of the crude, prehistoric town that the ancient moor men had built in the midst of the clutter of the tor. As he raised the glasses he brought into view beyond the circles a tall, upright stone of undressed granite rising twice a man's height above the turf.

And from it, in rows still regular, stretched lines of smaller stones, still upright, for the most part, although not all of the same height. For several hundred feet the gray granite remnants of some age-old glory marched across the moor. Upon this desolate slope the stone men must have erected one of the proudest of their primitive gathering places.

Slowly Donald Whiddon moved his glasses away from the dead town and surveyed the part of the moor over which the little old man had searched while the mist veiled his movements. There were no hut circles there; he could see nothing but blocks of granite irregularly spread upon the hillside.

Among them the mare and foal he had seen in the mist were traveling at a trot. Even as he admired their sure, swift movement among the huge obstructions, the dam shield suddenly, snorted a warning to her foal, and galloped up the slope.

"More mystery!" the sailor told him-

self. "What startled that pony this time? Not me. And there's nothing—yes, there is something!"

## IV

His eyes had fixed upon a form outstretched on the wet turf, snug against an outcropping of granite. It was the figure of a man, big-bodied and stout, clad in a gray sport suit, with a gray cloth cap over his eyes.

Against the gray stone ledge, his clothing made him virtually indistinguishable. Only the fact that his presence had startled the moor ponies had revealed him to Whiddon.

He lay with his face pointing down the slope toward the two men across the road. From them he was entirely concealed.

"I'll be damned!" Whiddon mused. "Still another man in this lonely place!"

Curiously, he swung his binoculars around the tor's side, but nowhere did he see other signs of men. While he searched, the little old man, recovering from his exhaustion, sat up and darted an impatient glance upwind, toward the tor. Apparently failing to see what he desired, he paced nervously among the stone circles that marked the ruined dwellings.

His queer companion did not move, or look at him. The man in gray, high above them on the hillside, maintained his vigilant watch.

A few moments elapsed. Then, with a sudden gesture, the little man pointed toward the tor. Whiddon, believing himself discovered, sprang back involuntarily.

The next instant, however, another gray mist stole down upon him over the granite peak, and he realized that it was at this vapor, and not at himself, that the old man below had pointed. "He was waiting for more mist," Whiddon decided.

Now the little man devoted himself to a careful scrutiny of the road, then led the way across it, and back up the slope. They had not yet reached their former position when the mist quite enveloped Whiddon, and he saw no more.

"This is worth keeping an eye on," he decided, and turned toward the towering tor. With the agility of a sailor who has been trained in sail as well as steam, he clambered steadily upward, finding handholds and footholds plentiful in the cracks and crannies of the disintegrating granite.

It was not a hard climb, nor a long one, for many centuries had taken toll of the

great mass of stone; and, although it still dominated the moorland for miles around, it was its bulk, rather than its height, that made it imposing.

At the top, standing on a flat ledge, Whiddon found himself in a world of white mist wherein the only solid matter was the gray rock beneath him. No sound came to him through the vapor. He could not have been more alone if the rest of the earth had suddenly vanished into eternity. It was an eerie thing, this being poised on a desolate peak, seeing nothing, hearing nothing.

"Like being on the royal yard in a pea soup fog, only worse," he mused, cautiously feeling his way to the edge of the flat rock. "But at least you could feel the ship rolling under you—"

A weird impression of movement, slow, stately, and unvarying, assailed his senses, like an echo of his thought of the roll of a ship. A queer panic arose in him, and he flung himself flat on the rock. The feel of its hardness instantly checked his fear.

"You crawling coward, you!" he rebuked himself aloud, and in his own ears his voice sounded shaky.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked inwardly. "Next thing you'll be thinking you see pixies, or crying for the skipper to come and tuck you in your bunk."

With a growl he stood upright, and advanced defiantly to the extremity of the ledge. "Get dizzy, why don't you?" he muttered. The next instant he felt it again, that same gentle oscillation.

Whiddon stood his ground, but his forehead went suddenly damp with perspiration. His grandfather had told him many queer stories about the desolate moor.

"I feel it, and yet that can't be an earthquake," he reasoned, reaching for a handkerchief.

His voice died away in his throat, and he gulped excitedly.

"A rocking stone! A loggan!" he exclaimed, his voice hoarse in his dry throat. "I wonder if that could be it!"

He ran to the inner end of the ledge and jumped to a lower level of the tor's irregular top. The huge slab of granite upon which he had been standing did not lie flat upon the mass beneath. Its under surface of softer stone was hollowed away.

Whiddon put his hands under the slab, braced himself, and heaved upward. Slow-



ly, the great rock moved upward a few inches, halted, and then came downward again, disregarding the seaman's effort to stay its steady movement.

"Wonder how many tons that thing weighs," Donald Whiddon mused, standing back to estimate the great bulk his human hands had moved. In the mist he could not see its outer end, which projected slightly beyond the main rocks of the tor. "Anyhow, it's one of the regular old rocking stones or loggans that granddad said the old pagan priests used to frighten their people with. It's a spooky place, this moor."

He rocked the loggan again, and then became conscious that the vapor around him was lightening. Swiftly he moved to the edge of the tor.

"I'll get down close and have a good look at what that old fellow's doing," he decided. "Maybe I can find out why he has that queer looking gorilla with him, and why Gray Cap is spying on them."

Descending, he paused at the bottom of the granite peak to take a bearing with his compass. Then, moving with caution and stepping as lightly as he could, he made his way down the hillside, keeping well to the right of the hiding place of the man in gray sports clothes.

He had come to within a hundred yards of the strange pair, as he reckoned the distance, when the mist thinned so perceptibly that he was compelled to take cover, lest Gray Cap, or the man he stalked, should catch sight of him. He had settled down into a soggy hollow in the hillside, where, he felt sure, he was not far from them.

## V

HE was not wrong. He was, in fact, uncomfortably close. When the last shreds of vapor were dispelled, he discovered that the frail old man was no longer pacing about.

Not a hundred feet away, Whiddon saw the elderly searcher down on his knees in front of a circular mound of turf, the shape of which was half concealed by the gorse and bracken that grew upon it. In this position he was digging away at the dirt with a spade in a haste that was frantic.

Above the mysterious searcher towered the huge, misshapen figure of his companion. He was facing the road, obviously on watch, but with his down turned eyes he was intently surveying the digging.

The little old man, halting his exertions to gasp for breath, looked up to discover the other's gaze upon the hole in the side of the mound.

"You great lout!" he shrilled, arising to his feet. "Did I not tell you to watch the road if the mist lifted? Where are your eyes? If you cannot watch, then dig. Take that iron bar; I've struck rock."

It came with a sudden shock to Whiddon that this fussy little man, like his gigantic helper, was an American. His voice was cultured enough, but obviously it was the voice of a fellow countryman.

The big ruffian did not answer this strident rebuke, save with an evil grin. He bent, and lifted the crowbar with no more effort than if it had been a wooden staff.

"Carefully, *carefully*, Hodges!" the old man exclaimed, his voice high with excitement, as the giant sent the iron tool lunging at the mound. "You must go slowly. Pry at it—that stone may be one side of the cistvaen."

"Cistvaen!" Whiddon had heard that word before—on his grandfather's lips. What was this? Had he been watching so intently what was merely the opening of the coffin of a chieftain of the stone age? But why, then, all this furtiveness? And what of the man hidden on the hillside above?

Whiddon did not move, but listened intently to the excited babble of the little old man, as he danced impatiently about the mound, throwing over his shoulder an occasional anxious glance at the deserted road.

"I've done it!" the aged one cackled. "How these English would writhe if they knew it. But I'll have these relics out of the country before they hear. Easy, Hodges; *easy!*"

He stopped to watch breathlessly a moment, as Hodges tugged at the bar, then went on:

"A myth they call it—that there ever was a mound here. But it was a tradition; it was inscribed in those old records of the lord of the manor. And Steynes didn't believe it. I'll have a fine reward for my perspicacity to show at home."

Whiddon frowned. Somehow the babble of this old man did not sound to him like the talk of an archaeologist. Hodges, pausing in his efforts, leaned on the crowbar and stole a keen glance from beneath his heavy brows at his excited employer.

"Lotta stuff in here, hey, Mr. Rathcliffe?" he asked ingratiatingly.

"Dig! Dig!" Rathcliffe commanded irascibly. "Don't you see the mist is gone. We may have to hide any minute. Stuff? There's a bronze helmet in there. Bronze—do you understand? There's never been another discovered in all Dartmoor. And besides, it is the dust of a stone age man. Do you understand how rare that makes it? Dig!"

The gigantic arms raised the crowbar again, and bent against it. The breath hissed out of Hodges's mouth, and he relaxed again.

"What 'd the ones that found it bury it again for?" he inquired doubtfully.

"Because they were fools!" Rathcliffe sneered, seizing the spade and scraping away ineffectually beside the stone. "What did a bronze helmet, a few stone arrows and spear points, mean to the superstitious lord of the manor four hundred years ago? Nothing, but that a tenant of his had violated a grave, and ill luck would come of it. Ha! Ill luck did come—to the serf who opened it—the lord saw to that. And after the relics had been put back, the lord decreed that no man should disturb the mound again."

He pointed downward at the road. "That was a pack horse trail then, but it still runs as it always did only a few yards from the stone rows. That gave me the clew. They call the old story a myth around here; even Steynes called it a myth when we bought the old records—never mind how—when the collapse of the old stone church of Samptor disclosed them to view."

Rathcliffe paused, turning to the giant for commendation of his cleverness. Hodges's face was blank until the old collector's head was turned downward again. Then he leered with sly glee.

"Steynes called it a myth, hey?" he said.

The old man chuckled. "We both called it a myth—I louder than he. But he really believed it was—and left the discovery for me, alone."

Hodges kicked at the turf beside the spade. "Ya ain't discovered nuthin' yet," he growled, and measured the length of the hidden rock by prodding it with his bar.

"I will; I will—if you'll hurry," Rathcliffe snapped, suddenly anxious. "This must be the place. There's not another

spot that looks like a barrow this side of the tor."

A feeling of disgust was rising in Whiddon; a feeling of disgust and disillusion. He felt that the high austerity and the brooding mystery of the moor had deceived him, caused him to attribute esoteric and dramatic motives to this ill-assorted pair.

Now he recognized the old man's type. He was merely a curio-hunting vandal, a type that wanders about, chipping monuments and stealing trophies to show on their return as evidence of adventure.

Whiddon knew well into what disrepute the greed of a few men like this had brought American travelers. And Hodges—probably the moor had intensified his appearance of primal ferocity.

The giant was striving hard now; he obtained a fulcrum for his bar, and suddenly bent the strength of his great chest and back against the rock. The iron ground against the stone, and then, quite unexpectedly, the slab gave way, and fell from its position. The movement revealed within the mound a cavity walled by flat stones, and surmounted by a great capstone of granite.

With an exultant cry, old Rathcliffe fell on his knees beside the ancient grave. He thrust his hand, then his whole head, within the stone-lined aperture.

"It's here!" he shouted with shrill triumph, as he dragged forth a few fragments of flint and then a roughly shaped fragment of dull metal. "I've found it!"

## VI

HODGES bent beside the old man. His eyes, deep set, merely flicked over the ancient helmet.

And then, with a swiftness unsuspected in his heavy-muscled body, he sent his great, solid fist thudding against Rathcliffe's white, wrinkled face. The blow struck the old man on his chin, fairly lifting him to his feet. His knees crumpled, and he collapsed on his back.

Whiddon, staggered by the sudden ferocity of the attack, could not move for an instant. He stared blankly through the bracken as Hodges, with a satisfied grin, bent over his victim.

Interruption came from another source. As Whiddon tensed his muscles, a shout of wrath came from the hillside above the cairn. The body of the man in gray sports clothes suddenly appeared in the clutter.

Whiddon sank back, with a feeling that there was more to be learned about this strange trio, and that he might need the element of surprise his secret presence there afforded.

The man who had been under cover did not halt until he reached the cairn. He seemed beside himself with mingled fear and wrath.

"You fool!" he raged at Hodges. "I told you to get the stuff away from him, not to kill him. You hit him as if he were an ox! Is he—is he dead?"

Hodges glanced with callous unconcern at the motionless figure of Rathcliffe. Then he turned with a growl to the other man.

"What were ya doin' up there, Steynes?" he demanded sullenly. "Spyin' on me to make sure I wasn't double crossin' ya? Is that it?"

"Of course I was!" Steynes stormed. "I was afraid you'd blunder, or try treachery; but, my God, I didn't think you'd kill the old fool! Is he—dead?"

Trembling, he moved toward Rathcliffe's inert body. Hodges stood back a step, his small black eyes fixed rigidly on the other man.

"If I did crack him too hard, you an' me will tuck him inside this here grave, an' beat it with the stuff," he proposed slowly, his gaze still intent, unwavering. "Dead or alive, he ain't got no come back at us now."

The giant's cool acceptance of the situation did nothing to allay Steynes's attack of nerves.

"No! No!" he protested, his voice quavering. His eyes were still held by the dread sight of the small, motionless figure at his feet. "We must try to revive him. He—he can't be dead. He can't be! I'll have no hand in it. He can have the bronze helmet. I—I'll have nothing to do with looting the poor old—"

"What!" the huge fellow exclaimed. He towered over the other man. His voice was savage, vibrant with menace. "Ya think ya c'n back out now—after I've croaked him for ya? Maybe squeal on me, too?"

Whiddon left his hiding place among the bracken and crept forward. Little did Rathcliffe and Steynes, two soft, civilized trophy hunters, realize what primitive passion, what stone age savagery, they were releasing on themselves when they took

this great beast of a Hodges into their schemings, the sailor thought fleetingly.

"I—" Steynes began, but the other man, cursing under his breath, lunged at him with that unexpectedness which had settled his employer. His great arms wound around the trembling man, crushing him toward Hodges's bulging chest.

Steynes screamed, a high, despairing cry that echoed from the tor above. Then he seemed to shrivel, to wilt away under the feral power of his burly antagonist. As he fell, unconscious, the maddened giant released his hold, stepped back, and seized a stone in both his hands.

"Think I'll swing alone for it, do ya?" Hodges shouted hoarsely, as he raised the weapon. "You double crossin'—"

Don Whiddon, charging forward desperately, and now within twenty feet, attracted his attention at that moment. With an uncanny strength and quickness, the giant shifted his aim and sent the stone hurtling at this new foe.

The sailor was rushing straight at the enraged man, in his effort to save Steynes. Utterly unprepared for the throw, he dodged a little too late, and the missile struck him a glancing blow on the left shoulder, spinning him around and knocking him off his feet.

Hodges flung his heavy body forward to drop on top of him, but Whiddon rolled sidewise and sprang to his feet as the giant fell sprawling. One movement of Don's left arm convinced him it would be of little use at close quarters. He must keep the raging man away from his unconscious victim by other means.

He stooped suddenly, and with his injured left hand scooped up the bronze helmet, and with the right a fragment of granite. Then he raced a few feet up the slope, slid to a stop on the wet turf, and threw his stone.

Hodges, still on hands and knees, ducked in time. As he did so, Don Whiddon laughed tauntingly, seized another sliver of rock, and danced temptingly nearer.

"Come on, you clod!" he challenged, and flung the second missile. This time the big man's dexterity did not save him. The stone thudded on his chest. With a curse, he sprang forward, his long arms outstretched.

The mate saved himself from their clutch by dodging behind a large boulder, but he had no time to seize another stone. As

Hodges rounded the rock at great speed, Whiddon raced up the hillside, shouting taunts over his shoulder, waving the bronze helmet.

The strategy succeeded only too well. Hodges, forgetting all about the two other men, bounded after Don. He came at a pace that made the sailor decide to save his breath and race silently up the slope. He hugged the bronze helmet to his chest, fearful that otherwise his numbed fingers might drop it.

Hodges gained. Arms working like pistons, he propelled his great body over turf and granite outcroppings with terrific power. Whiddon knew himself to be no runner; and, moreover, every nerve in his body screamed to him to turn and fight. But he pelted on up the rock-strewn slope, for only thus could he hope to save Steynes from the blind fury of Hodges.

Whiddon turned his head to look into the contorted face of the pursuing man. He had hoped to see some sign that the pace was telling on the giant, but there was none at all, nor was his breathing labored in the least.

Hodges was close now, almost so close that he might fling himself forward and grip Whiddon's legs. That would be the end of things.

The mate hesitated in his stride and whirled sharply to the right. Behind another great boulder he dashed, but instead of circling it, he ran on past it. Hodges slowed up an instant, to rush around it in the opposite direction, and found he had lost distance.

Whiddon's own breath was coming fast, now, and his heart was thudding as if it would break the walls of his chest, but he continued grimly to dash up the steep slope. Soon he would turn and make his fight.

He had given the fallen Steynes as much of a chance to recover and flee as he could. Now he must set about the matter of squaring accounts with this ravaging brute behind him.

## VII

THE tor loomed ahead. Whiddon sped toward it with a sudden thought. If he could make its top before Hodges, perhaps he might equalize the struggle somewhat.

The thudding feet behind him stopped suddenly. The mate looked backward. Hodges was picking up a rock. There

were plenty at Whiddon's feet, but he did not stop to return the fire.

This was his chance to gain the height. He turned his head forward again and, gasping, ran on, eyes half closed, in anticipation of feeling Hodges's rock crash into the back of his skull.

The bit of granite whizzed by, a foot wide of his head. He veered slightly to the left, without slackening speed, and heard another rock ricochet from a boulder behind him.

Then, disgusted at his failures, the giant resumed the chase. But the interval had given Whiddon his opportunity. He reached the foot of the tor, flung the helmet high up on to its level top, and began a swift climb.

His left hand was of little use in the scramble upward, but with feet, knees, and quick right hand, he made good progress. This was the point, under the loggan stone, that he had ascended before, and his knowledge of the holds helped him.

That was the time when stones would easily have brought him down, but Hodges had little of reason left in him, and the sight of his enemy apparently escaping drove him mad. He rushed to the base of the granite peak and leaped at it blindly, hands clutching.

By chance, his big fingers found no hold, and he fell back. Again he leaped, and failed to grasp a crevice.

Sobering somewhat under the check, he studied the wall of rock, and found cracks and hollows for his hands.

Whiddon's head came up over the top, and his eyes sought instantly for missiles. But among the great slabs of granite, perpendicular and upright, he saw no stone a man could lift. The loose rocks were in the clitter below, not on this smooth, bare peak. Not one of the slabs was much under the weight of the great loggan stone.

He pulled himself up over the edge and turned to look downward. Hodges, eyes upward, moved quickly sidewise, until he was under the overhang of the loggan, safe from the shower of missiles he anticipated.

"Throw 'em, ya sap!" he shouted derisively. "I'll be up there in a minute to break yer blasted neck for ya."

"You'll have an interesting time doing it," Whiddon muttered grimly to himself.

Close beside the loggan stone he lay, craning his neck and following, by the sound of scraping feet, the movements of



the foe below. The bulging surface of the tor beside the great rocking stone made it impossible for him to see the other man until he was almost within arm's length.

Hodges was coming more cautiously, now, but apparently quite sure of his man. Whiddon coolly admitted to himself that, with his crippled arm, he had no chance in a fight without rules against this savage assailant who was many pounds heavier than himself.

Therefore he determined to meet the giant at the edge of the tor. Hodges, too, would be handicapped there, and the struggle would be as deadly a combat as even such a brute could desire.

"He's not going to put a foot on this summit—whether I stay here or not," Whiddon resolved. "I'm no bleating lamb—like Steynes."

It was time to act. Stealthily he arose and crept out upon the great loggan, to a place where he could see the edge of the tor on either side of its suspended bulk.

The rasp of hands against stone became audible as he waited, crouching and hardly breathing. Then the snarling countenance of Hodges appeared over the protuberant cliff to the right of the rocking stone.

Whiddon leaped from the great, balanced slab straight to the brink of the tor where the giant clung. At the same instant, with that catlike quickness of his, Hodges shifted his grip to a crevice in the loggan. Hanging by his arms, he slung a heavy boot toward Whiddon's head.

The sailor snapped his body sidewise, and the foot grazed his shoulder and swung back. With a quick flexing of his arms, Hodges drew himself higher up on the overhanging side of the slab.

### VIII

THEN, in a slow, unhurrying movement, the great stone responded to the weight of the giant's suspended body. Hodges

felt the great mass to which he was clinging dip with the inexorable deliberation that had so startled Whiddon.

The slab of rock was moving downward. In an instant, it seemed, it would begin to slide over the verge, carrying him with it, to death under its tons of granite.

With a yell of terror he swung himself toward the edge of the tor. But he had released his hold on the loggan too soon.

His feet, instead of shooting up over the top of the tor, struck the side of it sharply, staying his momentum. His clutching arms encountered nothing but the empty air.

He fell, his great limbs outstretched. His heavy body plunged downward, well out from the side of the tor. It thudded upon a granite boulder at the base.

This man, so invulnerable to human hands, was soft and weak and puny against the stone of the moor. Death came to him almost instantly.

Slowly the great loggan stone swung back to the position it had held for centuries, and was stilled. Whiddon stared at it with prickling scalp; then looked down the slope toward the rifled cistvaen.

Steynes was on his feet now, unsteady, but supporting the feebly moving figure of Rathcliffe. Their faces were toward the road, and Whiddon, looking farther, saw a cart standing on it, and two countrymen descending from it in some haste.

Donald Whiddon picked up the battered, rudely fashioned bronze helmet. For a moment he looked curiously at its corroded, unbeautiful surface, then turned again toward the stone coffin from which it had been taken, and the two broken men awaiting aid beside it.

"I guess this belongs to the ancient days," he mused soberly.

Kneeling in swift decision, he thrust the helmet deep into a crack hewn by the ages in the eternal granite beneath the vengeful loggan stone.

### HAPPINESS

I ASKED the poor about happiness:  
They said 'twas wearing the newest dress,  
The finest clothes that ever were seen,  
And riding 'round in a limousine!

I asked the rich—and you'd never guess  
What they told me about happiness!  
They said 'twas having your old clothes on,  
And walking 'round, with a dog, at dawn.

*Charlotte Misk*

# One in Five Thousand

IN THIS STORY HOLLYWOOD TRANSMUTES CERTAIN DULL STATISTICS OF THE MOVIE BUSINESS INTO A SHINING ROMANCE OF IRREPRESSIBLE YOUTH

By Eric Howard

MARIAN HALL tossed the profusely illustrated periodical across the room, and said to herself: "Maybe so, but I don't believe it! Anyway—"

And then, with her bright copper hair pillowed on an orange cushion, and her slender, lithe body curled up on the couch, she fell to daydreaming—never a difficult thing for a girl of eighteen with hair and eyes and oval face that would delight artists who prosper from painting magazine covers.

The article that she did not altogether believe—for the simple reason that she did not want to believe it—was written by a very honest scribe in a thoroughly convincing manner. It was one of many that had recently been published on the theme: What Are Your Chances in Hollywood?

In this particular case, the author had reported that a girl's chances are one in five thousand. He cited statistics to prove it; he multiplied examples; he gave good advice.

Marian Hall followed his reasoning with quick intelligence, but she refused to accept his conclusions because they ran counter to her desires. So, probably, did many thousands of other readers throughout the country. The human ego is a great and wonderful thing.

Marian was not inordinately vain—although it is doubtful if any eighteen-year-old girl is without vanity—but she really believed, in spite of the article she had read, and others like it, that she was the one in five thousand who arose from the bottom of the ladder to the glittering heights of film stardom. She wanted to believe it, and so she did.

"I don't believe it!" she reiterated. "And, anyway, I'm going! I want to go,

and I'm going. It must be wonderful—to be an actress! Oh, I'm so happy!"

She got up and surveyed herself in the full length mirror. She made a quite attractive picture; in her own eyes, naturally enough, the picture was even more than that.

"Am I not prettier than—than any of the screen queens?" she asked herself. "Can't I act as well as—well, most of them? Don't I wear my clothes well? Oh, I shall succeed!"

There is no flattery so impressive as self-flattery. It, even more than love, makes the world go round.

Marian was, at this time, very much a free agent. She had long lived with her grandmother, her parents having died some years before.

Her home was a large, square, old-fashioned house in the middle of what remained of a Kansas homestead. The town had grown up around them, but Grandmother Hall had held to her ten acres and the old house.

Now Grandmother Hall was gone, and Marian was alone. The property she inherited was considerable, but by no means a great fortune. Luckily, most of it was held in trust.

But three thousand dollars in the bank was available for her current needs. With this as a "stake," Marian had determined to go to Hollywood, California, and to become the one in five thousand.

"I'll go to-morrow!" she assured herself triumphantly.

She had told no one of her intention, except Joe Brown. One couldn't help telling Joe things.

He knew them, usually, almost before they were told; he had the clairvoyance

of genuine interest—especially where Marian was concerned. Joe had tried sixteen different ways of changing Marian's mind, with the usual result—which was none at all.

Marian turned from the mirror as she heard a clear, loud whistle. That same signal had been calling her for more than five years. It was Joe's visiting card.

He was walking up the path now to the wide veranda of the old, square house. Marian ran out to meet him.

"Hello, Joe!" she called.

"Lo, Marian. Thought I'd just drop around awhile."

Joe always said that. Hatless, in white duck trousers, white shoes, and a white shirt, wearing neither coat nor tie—it was a warm Kansas evening—Joe didn't make a bad picture himself. If he had worn a cork helmet, he might have been an illustration for an adventure story—one of those tall, bronzed, capable young fellows who do big things on the far frontiers.

"I'm glad you did, Joe," Marian said. "I'm going to-morrow."

"To Hollywood?" Joe demanded. "Gee, I thought you'd got tired of that notion!"

"Notion! It isn't a notion. It's an ambition, a plan, a dream!" Marian sighed.

"It's a dream, all right. And when you wake up—"

"Oh, don't let's talk all that over again. I'm going! You might wish me success, instead of trying to discourage me."

"Sure. So you're really going?"

"Yes, I am. On the ten o'clock train. Of course, nobody but you knows why I'm going. I'm just saying that I'm going to visit in California. I have some second or third cousins there, you know, and I may look them up. Don't you say a word to anybody."

"All right. When are you coming back?"

"Not for a long, long time. Not until—I'm famous!"

"As long as that? Gosh! It's going to be lonesome without you, Marian."

"Will you miss me, Joe?" Marian practiced a bit of acting.

That was Joe's cue to respond with the ardor of a motion picture hero.

"Miss you?" he might have said, with a sob of repressed passion. "Lamp of life! Soul of the world! Beloved one, I cannot bear it! I shall die, I shall— Oh, dearest!"

But all Joe said, completely muffing his histrionic opportunity, was: "Sure, I'll miss you. What do you expect?"

"I'm sorry, Joe," Marian went on with her practice. "But—I must go! It is my destiny."

"Sure," Joe observed. "Want to walk down and have an ice cream soda? We ought to sort of celebrate, hadn't we?"

"If you wish it, Joe," Marian said softly, copying the tenderness from a well-known stage actress, even to the vocal inflections.

Marian was, of course, passionately fond of ice cream sodas. The need for counting calories had not yet cast its shadow upon her young life; she could eat anything—and quite a lot of it.

They strolled down the wide, elm-lined street to the Chocolate Shoppe.

"This is the life!" Joe declared. "I'll bet you won't find sodas to equal these out in Hollywood."

"Is life to you just something to eat?" Marian asked, looking quite spirituelle for the moment.

"Well, that's part of it, anyway," Joe replied calmly. "Say, Marian, if you're honestly going to stay out there, I'll be coming out to see you. It's going to be lonesome here, without you. You ought to take somebody from home with you. Why don't you take old Annie? She's been with your grandmother—"

"Annie!" Marian laughed. "Can you imagine her in Hollywood?"

"Well, it'd be a good thing for you if she went along, to look after you. You're just a kid, and you'll need looking after in a place like that. It's not the same as home, where you know everybody and everybody knows you."

"Of course not. But I can look after myself. You'll see."

"I don't know. Somebody from home ought to look after you. I can have pa write a letter to Mr. Harris, who used to be in the bank here. He's out there now."

"No, Joe, don't. I want to go alone. I want to make good on my own. And I know I can. Why, that man I paid twenty dollars to—you remember, the man in Hollywood—he assured me that I was a perfect screen type. He has my photograph on file, and he can get me work right away, I'm sure."

"Those fellows will tell you anything for twenty dollars," Joe observed. "Oh,

I don't doubt but that you're a good type, all right. You're rather pretty, too, sort of. And, of course, you're not going to be broke for some time. Still, I'd like to see somebody from home there to look after you."

Joe harped on this theme the remainder of the evening. It occupied his mind to the exclusion of all else. But it didn't worry Marian.

When Joe was saying good night—he had to get to work in the morning—Marian shook his hand. Then—

"You may kiss me, Joe, if you want to," she said shyly.

"Gee! Marian, if I kiss you, I'll either keep you here or go after you!"

"Well, if you don't want to—" Marian began.

Whereupon Joe gathered her into his arms and pressed his lips to hers. It was a very long and very ardent embrace. They had not kissed since they were children, and this was a very different caress from the last one.

"Joe," Marian protested, "I didn't mean—like that!"

"I did!" Joe declared. "Oh, Marian, why don't you stay here—until I can—Oh, Lord! If I only had— Won't you wait, Marian?"

"I'll write you often, Joe," she promised. "But I must go."

"Oh, all right," Joe muttered. "Well, I'll see you at the train."

Marian evaded his attempt to kiss her again, and ran into the house.

## II

THERE were two sections of the great transcontinental train that passed through Kansas. The second followed the first ten minutes afterward.

Marian's berth was on the first section. Joe had driven her to the depot in one of his father's cars—the Brown Mill and Lumber Company had a half dozen cars, and as many trucks—and had supplied her with magazines, candy, and fruit.

"You're good to me," Marian had whispered. And that was reward enough for Joe.

Then, when her train pulled out, he had turned to a lounge on the platform.

"Hey, Kelly!" he called. "Take the car back to the mill, will you? I'm catching the second section."

He secured his bag from the waiting

room, and stood ready to board the follow-up train. He grinned happily as he considered what he was doing.

It was lucky, he reflected, that his father had been able to spare him just now. He could take three months off, keep an eye on Marian for that length of time, at least, and look over conditions on the Coast.

Mr. Harris, who had been with the local bank, was now in real estate in Los Angeles. He had written to Joe's father that building was the great business in the West. He had urged Mr. Brown to come and see for himself.

Joe was going as his father's representative. If conditions were good, Mr. Brown might consider selling out and moving to the Coast.

Joe had lain awake most of the night, thinking about Marian. She was just a kid, and she did need some one to look after her. Joe himself was nearly three years older, and, of course, an experienced man of the world therefor. Early that morning he had convinced his father that he could be spared, and that now was the time to go.

He was very happy as he swung aboard the second section. A genial porter led him to his berth, stowed away his bag, and accepted with good grace the tip Joe handed him.

There is a widespread notion, accepted as truth by urbanites, that the citizens of small communities in the Middle West are "hicks." It is generally believed that they habitually chew straws; that they wear odd and out-of-date clothes, celluloid collars, and yellow shoes; that their hair is unmanageable, and that the men shave their necks. Alas for comedy, it is not so!

Joe Brown was a representative young villager. As such, he had studied, to good effect, the advertisements of the leading clothing manufacturers, hat makers, shirt makers, boot makers, and so on.

Without caring too much what he wore, for he spent a good deal of time in overalls, he dressed well and in good taste. In any crowd he would have passed, inconspicuously enough, as a young man of good appearance. He was no more a hick than is any other young, unsophisticated person.

As he glanced up, he saw, swaying down the aisle of the car, a young man of his own build, and, approximately, his own age. This chap was also well-dressed and well-groomed. An experienced observer



might have detected considerable difference between Joe's moderately priced and the other's very expensive raiment.

But it was not his clothing that attracted Joe to the man. It was something familiar about his face. Joe could have sworn that he had seen him before. Where, he could not say, offhand.

The stranger had a shy, whimsical, rather timid expression, Joe thought. Meeting Joe's gaze, he smiled faintly, and then passed on through the car.

Joe turned to watch him, and saw that he entered a drawing-room at the end of the coach.

"I guess I don't know him," Joe mused. "I don't know anybody that can sport a drawing-room, unless he's on a honeymoon or something. Well—"

He picked up a motion picture magazine and idly turned its pages. He told himself that he might as well learn as much as he could about Hollywood before he got there. He wouldn't be much good to Marian unless he knew.

"Well, I'll be darned! Of course!" he suddenly decided. "That's who it is! No wonder I didn't recognize him."

On the open pages before him there were two full-page photographs of the man he had just seen. One of them was labeled "With," and the other "Without." The only essential difference between them was the fact that in one the young man wore a monocle, and in the other he did not so adorn himself.

Passing through the car, he had not worn it. And it was the most recognizable thing about him; it was, in fact, his professional trade-mark.

The young man was none other than Douglas Boyd, world-renowned star of the films, the comedian who had caused more gales of laughter than could be counted.

"Well, I'll be darned!" Joe repeated mentally. "He looks like a regular guy, too."

Douglas Boyd proved himself a most regular fellow later that day. Joe was walking down the aisle, ahead of the celebrity, when the car gave a sudden lurch.

The Kansas youth lost his balance, and might easily have landed in the capacious lap of a hard-faced woman, who undoubtedly would have been caustic, had not Boyd, with a dexterity acquired in his work, seized him and held him until he had recovered his balance.

"Thanks!" Joe Brown exclaimed. "Say, you're Douglas Boyd, aren't you?"

"Sh-h-h!" said the other. "Whisper it, brother. They don't all know me, and I'd rather they didn't."

Then he smiled—that shy, diffident smile that is so welcome to those who dislike arrogant celebrities.

"I'm going in to lunch," Boyd remarked. "You, too?"

"Yes," Joe replied promptly.

"Come along, then." And thus, quite naturally, did the great comedian link his arm with the boy from a small Kansas town.

"Ham and eggs," Douglas Boyd commanded. There had been a time for him when ham and eggs were unprocurable.

"Me, too," Joe agreed.

Joe could not have reported just how their conversation began or developed. However, it was very natural—like talking to a barber. Presently he was telling Boyd, who appeared interested, all about Marian, his reasons for following her, his own life, his father's business, the condition of real estate.

"What chance has a girl to get into motion pictures?" Joe asked. "And make a success at it?"

"One in five thousand, so they say," Boyd replied, smiling. "It was hard enough when I started, but it's harder now. Still, she may be the one."

"I don't think so," Joe declared. "Oh, she's pretty and all that. But I don't think it's the work for her. Tell me this: is Hollywood as bad as it's painted?"

Boyd grinned. "How do you expect a loyal citizen and taxpayer to answer that? Well, I guess a very tiny part of it is as bad, maybe worse, than it's painted. But the rest of it is like any other place. As a matter of fact, you'll find whole streets out there—right near my studio there are some—that will remind you of home. Lots of people from your State live there. So how can it be all bad?"

"But for a kid of a girl? Marian's only eighteen."

"Depends on the girl, largely," Boyd observed with great wisdom. "For silly girls, with no money, it's dangerous, because they usually find—not only in Hollywood, but almost anywhere—silly men with money. I think Marian's safe."

"She will be, with me there," Joe asserted confidently.

"Of course. But what are you going to do? Have a fling at acting yourself?"

"Me? I should say not!" Joe protested, almost blushing. He had no great respect for actors, or had had none until he met Boyd. "I couldn't act. There's a friend of my dad's out there, in real estate. I thought maybe I could get into that, or into building. But here I've been talking all about myself. Say, how do you think up all the funny things you do?"

"I don't," Boyd admitted frankly. "We all get together and talk 'em over. Most of the stunts are thought up by my staff. They're the funny fellows. I just do the things."

"Oh! That's all, is it? Well, I'll tell the world, that's enough! Gee, Marian and I laughed over that tunnel picture of yours."

"I'm glad you did. But it was hard work. We had to go to New York to get the subway—I wish they had one out in California—and I always hate the trip. I've just been there again; we had some more subway stuff in the picture I'm making now. I came on ahead of my company, to get a little rest while they shoot more New York scenes."

"You have to go to New York for those scenes?"

"Not usually. But for subway stuff we do, if we want it to look real, and have much of it. For buildings and so on, we can use what we have in Hollywood and Los Angeles."

"I see."

He didn't see—entirely; but, having an active mind, with new and reliable information placed before it, he began to think. Joe was still thinking when he parted with Douglas Boyd.

All that afternoon he busied himself with figures—figures so large that they were almost unmanageable. For the first time in his life, Joe was showing that he had inherited at least a little of that quality that had made the Brown Mill and Lumber Company so successful.

### III

MR. SCHNITTKIND bowed low before his latest client. Out of the corner of his shrewd eye he could see that this one had money. She was well dressed, not quite in the current Hollywood fashion, but a bit more expensively than most of the girls who came to his office.

Also, as Mr. Schnittkind observed, she had that starry-eyed look which indicates hopeful ambition.

Mr. Schnittkind was the gentleman who had taken twenty dollars from Marian Hall for "professional services." Those services consisted of assuring her that she had a wonderful screen face, and of placing her photograph on file, where, as he intimated, famous directors could see it.

It was true that they could see it, but they didn't, for the very good reason that they never came to Schnittkind's office. Well, that wasn't his fault, was it? The office was there.

Most of his income came through the mail. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of young women and young men had parted with twenty dollars each in order that he might place their photographs on file. He did not assure them, knowing, as he did, the postal regulations, that as a result they would be engaged to play in pictures; but he permitted them to imagine that.

Some of them, eventually, found their way to Hollywood and to Schnittkind's office. He quickly got rid of those who were too poor to make good clients.

Those who, like Marian, evidenced some capital, he kept coming. Once in a hundred times, perhaps, he secured such a one a few days' work in one of his friends' cheap productions.

Schnittkind himself had been an actor and a director. As a director he wasn't successful. As an actor he made good, after a fashion, in certain character parts.

But he was now blackballed, because he had developed the idiosyncrasy of getting himself injured while working, and then suing the company for damages. This happened three times; after that none of the companies would give him a chance to get hurt.

"You're too delicate," one director had gently put it. "I can't use you. I would be afraid to ask you to walk across a room. You might stub your toe, or something."

Schnittkind grinned, and went into the twenty-dollar photograph business. His prospectus was illustrated with "stills" showing him in plays with leading stars.

The great character actor, he called himself. Also, the discoverer of screen talent, and a number of other highly complimentary things. The boy was good.

"I am Marian Hall," said the girl before him, in answer to his bow.

"Of course!" he smiled cordially. "I'm so glad to see you, Miss Hall. Won't you sit down?" He held a chair for her, and went on: "If you will pardon me for one moment, I have something to attend to. I shall be right back."

He had to go into another room, run hastily through a filing cabinet, and find Marian's folder, containing all of their correspondence. A glance at that refreshed his memory.

When he went back to her, he knew her age, he knew that her parents and her grandmother were dead, that she had been left some money, that she had long wanted to be an actress, and a few other things. Reinforced with this information, he could talk to her as if she—and she alone—had been occupying his thoughts all that day. And he did so talk.

"I was showing your picture to a friend of mine," he said, "only this morning. Big producer, y' understand. He was very much interested—yes, very much, indeed. I shouldn't be surprised if he wanted you for a big part. Of course, we can't ever be sure about engagements, but I'm glad you're here. He might not want to send East for you; but now that you're here—well, if he wants you, that would save time. Now, how much do you know about make-up—screen make-up?"

"Very little, I'm afraid," Marian admitted regretfully.

"H-m!" Schnittkind frowned. "That's not so good."

"But I can learn!" she protested eagerly.

"Of course you can!" he agreed. "But you should learn all about it as soon as possible, just in case he—er—my friend, Mr.—in case he wants to use you. I'll tell you! I have some time for a special pupil right now. I could give you a quick course in make-up. Then—you'd be ready!"

"Oh, thank you!" Marian said with hearty gratitude. "How much will it be?"

"Fifty dollars," Schnittkind replied, and when the bills rolled easily out of Marian's bag into his fat hand, he cursed himself for not making it one hundred. Still, he reflected, there are other courses she would need.

There always were. One woman had taken eight courses from him and had not yet heard a director's bellow.

"Come to-morrow morning at ten,"

Schnittkind told her. "I shall give you an hour's lesson every day. In two weeks, or less, you will know as much about make-up as—even I do." He smiled playfully.

"Oh, Mr. Schnittkind!" Marian said. "Hardly that much!"

"Well, enough, anyway. Meanwhile, I shall do all I can to secure a good part for you—if not with my friend, with another producer." Expansively, he gave the impression that he knew all the big ones, and that they liked him to call them by their nicknames.

"That's good of you," Marian thanked him.

"Not at all." He arose to terminate the interview, having the fifty dollars. "It's my business."

"I—I wonder," Marian began, "if you could suggest a place for me to live. I just got here, you see. I don't want to live in a hotel. I'd like a little bungalow, I think."

"I know just the place!" Schnittkind declared. "I'll give you a card to the agent."

It was fortunate, perhaps, that Schnittkind was a highly moral man except in financial matters. He recommended to Marian an entirely respectable dwelling place, that quite delighted her, and he made no attempt, beyond securing her money, to presume upon her reliance on his judgment. Schnittkind was not one of the wild citizens of Hollywood; he was of another class—those who, by hook or crook, separate the easy marks from their wherewithal.

But Marian left him with only the kindest feelings. How good of him to give her special instruction! And for only fifty dollars!

She moved, bag and baggage, into her furnished, tiny bungalow in a pleasant court. It was somewhat like living in a row of dolls' houses; but, since Marian was very young, and not too individualistic, she thought it would be fun.

Sitting in her living room, she could hear the radio next door, the quarreling couple opposite, the crying child on the other side, and everybody that passed up and down the walk. This much could be said for it; it was livelier than her home had been.

She procured prepared food at a delicatessen shop at the corner, and ate heartily of starches and sweets. She was young enough and slender enough to do that.

Then, as she consumed the last of a creamy dessert, thinking, meanwhile, of the success she had already had—for Schnittkind spelled success to her—she resolved to write to Joe. Wouldn't he be surprised?

## IV

It was Douglas Boyd who advised Joe Brown not to let Marian know that he was in Hollywood, for some time.

"Let her have a try at it on her own," Boyd said. "If she writes you regularly, you'll know what she's up against. Meanwhile, look into real estate and building. See what you can do here, and be ready—when she's ready to go home."

"Marian's got spunk. I don't think she'll give up."

"If she won't, she may need you more than ever. Be ready. And if you need help, let me know."

They were getting off the train. Douglas Boyd's car was there to meet him. He waved to his chauffeur, and then shook hands with him.

"How's the old boat running, Buddy?" he asked. "Here's a friend of mine—Joe Brown. Joe, meet Buddy O'Brien. He knows all the cops, and can outtalk 'em."

"Pleased to meet you," Buddy grinned.

"Jump in, Joe," Boyd suggested, "and I'll drop you wherever you say."

Joe was dropped, subsequently, at a modest Hollywood hotel, where Douglas Boyd had lived during the period of his film apprenticeship.

"Tell 'em you know me, and they'll give you credit—if you need it," the star said.

"Thanks, but I won't need it. I've got an idea, though, that I may need some help with—"

"Any time!" Boyd promised. "I'll call you up soon. I want you to come to dinner at my house."

"I'd be afraid of the butler," Joe declared, smilingly.

"No, you wouldn't. He's a good scout, isn't he, Buddy?"

"Sure. We put on the gloves every morning."

With a final hand-shaking, Boyd and Buddy drove off. Joe entered the hotel and registered. From the clerk's attitude, he knew that he had been seen with Douglas Boyd. He was already established as a friend of the great.

In his room, Joe reflected upon his good

luck. He was sufficiently modest to wonder why Douglas Boyd had been so friendly.

He didn't realize that the comedian, isolated by his wealth and fame, was tired of sycophants and pretenders; that he appreciated regular fellowship. In fact, Boyd had offered to help Joe, should he need help, chiefly because he was the first person he had met in several years who was not seeking his aid.

Joe was young enough and self-reliant enough to ask nothing of the world but what he could take. Still, he had an idea.

At about the time when Marian was paying Schnittkind for his make-up course, Joe called upon Mr. Harris, the former home town banker. He witnessed, in looking upon that gentleman, a marvelous transformation. Mr. Harris, at home, had been conservative in manner, in speech, in dress, in business.

Now, in this warmer clime, he had developed subtropical plumage—plus fours, bright-hued golf stockings, shirts, and ties, and collars, and hats that were works of art. Likewise, his speech and manner had undergone development. He was quite expansive.

"Joe, my dear boy!" he exclaimed. "Old Bill Brown's Joe, as I live and breathe! Welcome to our city! I'm delighted to see you."

He thrust a cigar upon Joe, held a match to it, and lighted his own. In five minutes Mr. Harris had asked all the usual questions about the folks at home, had invited Joe to dinner at one of his clubs, had offered to put him up for membership at a golf club, and had told him all about business conditions.

"Get your father out here!" he concluded. "It's great! Old Bill and I could put 'em all out of business, son. Why, opportunity doesn't merely knock—she crashes the gate! Yes, sir!"

"I'm glad to hear that," Joe nodded. "I'm to be here for a while—perhaps three months—and I shouldn't mind opening the door for opportunity while I'm here."

"You won't have to. You can't escape her. But what brings you here?"

"Do you remember Marian Hall?"

"Of course, I do! She was the prettiest child in the State of Kansas! I remember you always used to play around with her ever since you were knee-high to a grasshopper."



"Well, she's here, trying to get into the movies. I came, too—though she doesn't know it—just to be here in case—"

"I see! Good for you! Of course, there's nothing doing in the movies any more. Not much chance, even for Marian. But you were wise to come along. Now, then, what do you want to do? Come into my office and try the real estate racket? Or build a few houses on some lots of mine? Or what? I can stake you to a good start, and, on my say-so, I guess old Bill would put up some."

"Well, I've got an idea," Joe announced, a bit timidly. He wasn't sure how his idea would sound when presented to a shrewd business man. Still, there was no harm in presenting it. "I came out on the train with Douglas Boyd, and we got to be sort of friendly. He's a great scout!"

"I'll say he is!" Mr. Harris agreed. "He gave a little talk at my lunch club the other day. I never laughed so much in my life."

"Well, he gave me the idea," Joe went on. "He was telling me about making that subway picture—you remember it?"

"I'll say I do!"

"Well, it seems that whenever they need subway scenes in a picture—and, of course, they need quite a few every once in awhile, because a lot of the stories are about New York, and what's New York without a subway?—they have to go there to get the scenes. He was returning from another trip, and he told me that other companies were always going back for the same reason. It seems they have everything out here—buildings, streets, and everything else—that New York has except a subway system."

"We'll have that before long!" Mr. Harris boasted. "The Realtors' League is agitating for it now. Within five years we'll have to have it. And within ten years it will be built."

"Five? Ten?" Joe echoed. "Gosh, that's a long time! Have you got about ten acres of land, not too far out?"

"Ten acres? Why, son, I've got hundreds of acres within the city limits. Of course, the city limits go darn near to San Francisco!" He winked.

"Well," Joe said, "my idea is this: let's build a copy of a part of the New York subway—station, platform, tracks, trains, and all—under that ten acres! And then we can rent it to the picture people!

They'll be glad to pay, say, one-half as much as it now costs 'em to take their companies to New York, counting the lost time, besides. And, with a subway right here, more of 'em will make New York pictures."

To say that Mr. Harris nearly fell off his chair is to put it mildly.

"Say!" he cried. "Say! That is an idea! But we'll have to look into it—cost of building, and all that. And we'll have to get an idea of how much rent we can charge, how often they'll use it, and so forth. Leave that to me! I can find out. And, if it looks feasible, we'll do it! Anyway, I can say this for you, Joe—you're original! And so's your old man! Haha! What do you say we play some golf?"

"Sure," Joe agreed. And off they went, in a car that was quite as elegant as Douglas Boyd's.

V

MARIAN, in the course of a week, had acquired considerable skill in the use of paint and powder, cold cream and mascara. This sort of thing Schnittkind was able to teach. And, being a kindly man, save in his predilection for easy pickings, he taught her well. She became, what is somewhat rare, even among professionals, expert at make-up.

But when she mentioned securing an engagement for her, Schnittkind stalled for time. He was on good terms with only those Poverty Row producers of the fly-by-night sort whom he sometimes helped to sell stock. And none of them, just now, was working, or could pay any salary.

He might have proposed that Marian work for one of them without salary, just for the sake of experience, but this would not be the right approach to further collections. So he stalled.

Marian eagerly practiced make-up until her face hurt. Then, in lieu of a real engagement in a production, she enrolled with Schnittkind for a course in facial expression. The fee was one hundred dollars.

After that, he had a course in physical grace, which Marian did not need, that he was ready to give her for one hundred and fifty dollars. If she developed into what he ironically termed a "permanent student," he might get as much as five hundred dollars from her.

There came to him, then, one of his producer friends, a gentleman who skated on

extremely thin ice over a cold, deep abyss of indebtedness.

"Schnitty," this nervous chap said, without preamble, "you gotta help me out. If I don't get money, right now, they'll take everything I own."

"About how much do you need?" Schnittkind inquired.

"A thousand dollars—and I've got to have it before noon to-morrow."

"Ouch!" quoth Schnittkind, who had a fat bank account. "I haven't got it."

"Like hell you haven't!" the other schemer frankly retorted. "But I didn't expect you to loosen up. You'd see me in jail first. Put me on to somebody with dough, can't you? Somebody I can sell some stock to."

"Well—" Schnittkind began.

"Put me wise to some old dame with an urge!" the needy one pleaded. "An urge, and some dough. That's all I ask! I'll give her a part in this comedy I'm making—a fat part. And I'll sell her a thousand dollars' worth of stock. Then I'm all right. Will you do it?"

"Where do I come in?" Schnittkind asked, in true pirate spirit.

"You!" Morris, the producer, cried. "You low life! Well, if I can sell her more than a thousand shares, you get all over that."

"Does she have to be old?"

"I should worry about statistics," Morris shrugged. "But the older they are, the easier they fall—if they have an urge."

"There's another saying: youth must be served," Schnittkind pointed out. "I know a young girl that'll do, I think. Leave your fake stock with me. Fifteen hundred dollars' worth will do. And you'll get your thousand to-morrow."

Morris's company was incorporated, most conveniently, under the laws of an Eastern State. He had secured papers that permitted him to run railroads, steamships, factories, or anything else. He had an inexhaustible amount of stock for sale.

Just now he was engaged in making a two-reel comedy. He had been so engaged for one year. The comedy should have been a great thing, but it wasn't. It was, of course, just an excuse for selling stock. It gave him something tangible to show to his prospects.

Whenever he needed money, not for production, but for his own use, he sought a prospect with an urge to appear in pic-

tures. Then he sold stock, and continued to eat. When all of the stock had been sold—one hundred thousand dollars' worth—Morris would walk out of the rented studio and organize another company.

It would be futile to report in detail Schnittkind's interview that day with Marian Hall. He called her on the telephone, and told her that he had secured an engagement for her. She arrived at his office, not long afterward, in a glow of beautiful excitement.

She was already sold on the proposition. It required not much effort on the part of the clever Schnittkind to obtain her check for fifteen hundred dollars, in return for which he gave her Morris's stock.

"And when do I start working?" she asked.

"To-morrow morning—at ten," Schnittkind replied. "Report to Mr. Morris at the studio."

It did not appear strange to Marian that she should have to purchase an interest in the production in order to work. Schnittkind assured her that this was not an unusual procedure. He cited many great stars who owned part of their producing companies.

Her purchase of this little bit of stock, he explained, was simply a guarantee that she would not break her contract. And she was to receive a salary of one hundred dollars a week, beginning as soon as the production started—which would be within a week or two.

Marian's letter to Joe, written that night, was a detailed account of her success. And, by the time that letter had gone to Kansas and returned to California, Mr. Morris had induced Marian to buy another thousand dollars' worth of stock.

By that time, too, Marian's stake of three thousand dollars, what with living expenses, tuition paid to Schnittkind, and stock buying, had dwindled to nearly the disappearing point. But she had begun to work, and she would receive one hundred dollars each week—if something didn't hold up the production. Leave it to Producer Morris to see that something did.

## VI

WHEN Joe Brown received Marian's letter in which she reported her purchase of stock, his first impulse was to get hold of Schnittkind and Morris and to punch their heads. Instinctively, being the son of a

hard-headed business man, he knew that Marian had been bunked.

From her preceding letters he had secured Marian's Hollywood address, and he spent many of his hours in that vicinity when he was not engaged with Mr. Harris. He wanted desperately to stroll down the street, past her bungalow, whistling as of old. But, if Marian knew that he was in Hollywood to look after her, she would be furious.

Now, however, he had to do something. Calming down after reading her letter, he realized that it would do her no good to have the heads of the robbers punched. No, he had to think of something more sensible than that.

He had been to Douglas Boyd's for dinner, had met Boyd's charming young wife and adorable child, and had not been awed by the majestic butler. Boyd had been consulted about the subway plan, and, after an investigation, had entered into it quite enthusiastically.

"Gee, now I'll never have to go to New York!" he exulted.

At which Mrs. Boyd and the baby both gurgled.

The three men—Harris, Douglas Boyd, and Joe—had held conferences about the plan. And then, sure that it could be made a success, Harris had gone to work. Excavation was already under way, and tentative agreements had been secured from a half dozen of the larger producers.

Joe was constantly on the job, keeping a check on labor, materials, and time. Harris and Boyd were, themselves, financing the project, but Joe had secured a sizable share in it for the contribution of his idea.

Incensed at the robbery of Marian, Joe called on Douglas Boyd.

"It's a common enough skin game," the comedian said, when he knew the facts. "And, so far as I know, there's no way of stopping them. In this case, though, since Marian's a minor, we might get her money back."

"No, she isn't a minor," Joe corrected. "She's nearly nineteen."

"That's right. Well, if you want me to, I'll put my lawyer on it. He can probably scare them into giving back the money."

"And then Marian would say I had ruined her career!" Joe observed. "I wish there was some other way. Does this fellow Morris ever make a picture?"

"He may make one, once in awhile.

But they're never released. There are quite a few like him here. They make pictures, not for release, but just to sell stock. That's the graft. Getting a release is more than half of producing pictures. If everybody approached by a stock salesman would ask about the release, and get a guarantee on that, there would be no money lost."

"Gee, I'd like to see Marian have a chance! If they'd only make the picture, on the square, and give her a chance to do something!"

"Joe, I'll tell you!" Boyd suggested. "I'll look into this. Maybe I can put one of my assistant directors on the job—and a gag-man or two—and make something of it. If Morris will get out—"

"You mean you'll make her picture?" Joe cried. "Say, if you can do that, I'll stand any loss! We'll give her a chance. And, if the picture's no good, I'll buy it from you—for whatever it costs."

"Fair enough," Douglas agreed. "But, with a good director, and two of my gag-men—I defy anybody to make a flop! Anyway, it will show what she can do."

"Oh, boy! Now I don't feel so rotten about them taking her money. But Marian mustn't know that I had anything to do with it."

"Of course not. Run along, now—you've got to dig our subway to-morrow."

Joe went home and gazed upon one of Marian's photographs.

"I'd rather you didn't want to be an actress," he told her likeness, "but, if you're going to be one, by gosh, you'll be a good one!"

Douglas Boyd, that same evening, summoned one of his assistant directors and two of his gag-men. He told them what he knew of Morris and Marian, and directed them to buy Morris out.

"Then—do what you like," he instructed them. "Study this girl, give her the story she can do, and pep up the production. I'll leave it all to you. A friend of mine is backing it. Don't spend any more than you have to, but don't let her flop—if she's any good at all."

Marian was getting close to the verge of the discovery that she had been bilked—Morris gave her so many reasons for delay—when she was called into his office. She was intending to demand action, of some kind, when she saw that Mr. Morris was not there.

"He's gone to New York," one of the three men present announced. "And he isn't coming back. We've bought him out. We start working right away. Your contract is good with us, and you'll get your salary. Teddy, read us an outline of that story."

Teddy, chief gag-man, read the synopsis. It was very funny: the story of a girl from Kansas who is mistaken for a famous actress, and consequently involved in all manner of situations. There were many points where Marian identified herself with the heroine.

"Can you play that, Miss Hall?" the director asked.

"I—I think so. It's much better than Mr. Morris's idea. His was silly."

"I should hope it's better," Teddy said. "I wrote it!"

"All right," the director snapped. "Give me a working script by this afternoon, boys, and let's go! I'll look over the junk in this studio. If we haven't any sets, I guess Doug will lend us what we need."

"Doug?" Marian asked.

"We're working for Douglas Boyd," the director replied. "And so are you—I guess. Lady, we'll make the funniest two-reeler you ever saw, except some of Doug's own."

## VII

"JOE!" Mr. Harris cried. "What do you think of this? M-G-M is making a big special that involves the building of a subway? They want to rent our hole in the ground now—before it's built. Didn't I tell you that out here opportunity crashes the gate. That's an example for you. Why, we'll get our money back before it's spent. Wow!"

"Wow!" Joe agreed, grinning. "That's great! Now I know that I can pay back Doug if he loses on Marian's picture."

"Sure! Say, ain't it time you went to call on Marian in person, Joe? You've been looking sort of sad, the last few days."

"Gee, I'd like to see her. But I guess I hadn't better until the picture's done. Doug's going to run it as soon as it's finished, in his house. Then we'll see what it's like."

"Know the worst, in other words, eh? Well, Marian's certainly lucky in having you out here. If it hadn't been for you, Joe, she'd be broke and out of luck now. She'd be going from one studio to another,

sitting on all the extra benches, waiting for a kind word from casting directors—who ran out of kind words years ago. I'll say she's lucky! How she ever let those robbers take her money beats me. And why didn't she look me up? An old friend of her people, and she never even comes to see me!"

"She wanted to make good on her own," Joe said.

"Nobody can ever do that. It's a mistaken notion of you youngsters. This world is run by friends sticking together. Absolutely! Where would you be on this subway deal without Doug and me? Where would either of us be without you? Friends, son, working together—that's the back of every success. And I'll bet it's the same in pictures. The one in five thousand that gets there has friends—the same as Marian."

"I only hope the picture will be good. I'd hate to see Marian disappointed."

"Me, too. I hope it's as good as the subway. Say, when we get this thing going, we ought to expand. Expansion—that's business, son. Always keep expanding. Now, why couldn't we, once the subway's all set, go into the business of building anything they need for pictures; any unusual set, see, that they can't get in this part of the country? We could have everything—waterfalls, deserts, complete farms. No more location trips. Everything right here, ready to shoot. What say?"

"Fine; but we've got to go slow. We've got to add one thing at a time."

"Sure. But I think we're on the right track. You leave it to me!"

Meanwhile, Marian was working every day in her picture. She had always visioned her motion picture career as a dramatic one. She had dreamed of intense emotional rôles.

And now she was playing in comedy—almost slapstick comedy, at that. But it was great fun. She laughed until she wept at the antics of some of the comedians. She discovered that she enjoyed burlesquing serious business much more than she would have enjoyed playing it straight.

Admitting even to herself her complete inexperience, she permitted the director to tell her exactly what to do, and she did it. Everything conduced to her success in the making of the picture. The story was written for her, and fitted like the well-known glove; the gag-men were past masters at



creating funny action; the titles, later to be written, would themselves cause any audience to laugh.

Under no other circumstances could Marian have done such good work in her first picture. And in this, of course, it was being done for her.

Marian accepted her good fortune not without some thought. It was so entirely different from the magazine articles she had not believed. Of course, she still felt sure that she was the one in five thousand for whom success was certain; but, as she wrote to Joe, it was all like a dream.

"And that's that!" the director observed, one day. "As soon as it's cut and edited, it's ready for release. Go home, lady, and rest up for the next one. Salary goes right on. As soon as we're ready to look at the finished picture, I'll let you know."

### VIII

MARIAN had finished the last crumb of a chocolate éclair, one evening, when the doorbell rang.

"Greetings!" the director said. "The limousine is at the door. Want to see the picture?"

"Oh, I do! I'm crazy to see it!"

"All right. Put on a warm coat, because the limousine is an open roadster, and we'll run out to the big boss's."

"The big boss?"

"Sure, Doug's. He's having the picture run at his house."

"Oh, but I haven't anything to wear!"

"Doesn't matter. Only a few people will be there. And the chances are Doug's wife will be wearing a sweater. They're just folks."

All the way to Beverly Hills, where Doug's house is a show place, Marian thought of how wonderful everything was. It was more than ever like a dream!

Joe—poor Joe—wouldn't be able to believe it when she wrote him. Joe was getting farther and farther away.

She liked him, too; she would always like him. She had missed him, even when she was very busy making the picture. She had written him long and frequent letters, for he was her only confidant.

But she would be a great star; he would remain in Kansas, working for his father. Even if she loved him, he wouldn't be happy out here, known as the husband of Marian Hall. And she couldn't go back,

give up all that she had won, no, not even for love.

But it made her sad—awfully sad, as sad as only a young girl can be. She was confident that the picture would be a success. She didn't even fear Douglas Boyd's criticism.

"Why," she suddenly demanded, "is Mr. Boyd interested in this picture?"

"I don't know," the director replied. "All I know is, he said a friend of his was backing it, and he told us to jump in and make it a go."

"A friend of Mr. Boyd's? Why—do you suppose it was Mr. Schnittkind?"

"Schnittkind? You mean that faker that runs a school for acting? I should say not!"

"Is he a faker? Why, he got me that engagement with Mr. Morris."

"For how much?" the director queried.

"Why—I bought twenty-five hundred dollars' worth of stock, but—"

"You poor kid! Those pirates ought to be jailed!"

"But Mr. Schnittkind was very nice."

"Why shouldn't he be? It paid well."

Marian was silent. Who was the friend of Mr. Boyd's? Why was he backing the picture? He couldn't be interested in her, for she knew no one—or almost no one—out here. Then why had she been retained to play the leading part in the comedy?

"Here we are, ladies and gentlemen!" The director imitated the spieler of a sight-seeing bus. "On your right the million-dollar residence of Douglas Boyd, the world's champion laugh maker."

In spite of her unanswered questions, Marian laughed.

Then, presently, she was meeting Mr. and Mrs. Boyd, and finding them delightful. Only he looked so different, and not so funny, without his monocle.

"We're all ready to view your picture, Miss Hall," Douglas said. "The others are in the projection room."

They led her into a darkened room, a miniature motion picture theater. When they were seated, Douglas gave an order. Then, flashed on the screen, appeared this legend: Marian Hall in "The Happy Daze."

For thirty minutes thereafter, chuckles, guffaws, laughter of all degrees, filled the room. Everybody laughed, even Marian.

She was pretty, of course, even on the screen; but even her prettiness made her

funny, as the gag-men had used it in the story. After seeing "The Happy Daze," Marian was dazed with happiness.

As the lights went up, and everybody was shouting congratulations, Marian blinked. A trace of tears appeared in her eyes. At this moment of triumph, she thought of Joe, and she was sad because he would remain in Kansas, working for his father, while she rose to the heights.

Poor Joe! No, poor Marian, she corrected herself. At this, of all moments, she remembered his kiss, and she knew, young as she was, that she would never forget it.

"They say it takes sorrow to make an artist," she murmured to herself. "Well, if it does, I'm it!"

"May I present a friend?" Douglas Boyd was saying. "Mr. Brown. Miss Hall."

Still blinking, Marian managed to open her eyes.

"Joe!" she cried. And then, before them all, she flung her arms about his neck. Joe blushed manfully. "However did you get here, Joe?"

"Why—er—why—"

"Mr. Brown," Douglas helped him out,

"is the general manager of the Hollywood Subway Company. And also the producer of the Marian Hall comedies."

"Joe!" Marian exclaimed. "You're the friend of Mr. Boyd they've been telling me about! But how—"

"Gosh, I've been lonesome, not seeing you!" was Joe's response. "And, listen, I've found a place where they make ice cream sodas almost as good as the Chocolate Shoppe back home. And—"

"How—"

"Oh, that! I'll tell you all about it some time. But now—"

When you see subway scenes in a picture, you can count Joe's profits. When you see a Marian Hall comedy, you will laugh. In Beverly Hills there's a new house, not far from Douglas Boyd's, where two Kansans live. They're noted for their fondness for ice cream soda.

When interviewed, Marian says, truthfully: "I owe my success to my husband." And nowadays she tells motion picture aspirants exactly what that article she didn't believe told her.

And Schnitkind says to his clients: "Look at Marian Hall! I made her!"

### THE LONE ROAD

I KNOW a sad and lone road  
That winds through endless night;  
And I call that road my own road,  
For it shines with a secret light:

The light of dark stars beaming—  
Stars that are never seen,  
Save through the mists of dreaming,  
As through an enchanted screen.

My road is near a loud sea,  
Where strong waves shout and roar;  
But the waters of that proud sea  
Never wash in to shore.

Be the music of bursting white foam  
A dirge or a serenade,  
My spirit is soothed by the light foam,  
And I turn to a quiet glade

Where one rose rises, weaving  
A far, flame-threaded spell,  
Then fades and withers, leaving  
An odor of asphodel.

At the side of my road in soft grasses,  
My dream is more quiet and deep  
Than the hidden wind that passes  
Its cool fingers over my sleep.

Angus Donaldson

# He Needed the Money

THE STORY OF A YOUNG MAN TO WHOM ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS SEEMED A MONUMENTAL AFFAIR UNTIL HE LOOKED AT THEM THROUGH THE EYES OF LOVE

By Garret Smith

**W**ILBUR DALE picked his way gingerly around the bend of the dusty Long Island byroad. There, at the apex of the turn, he came face to face with what in his present low state of mind he conceived to be his own future.

This personification of young Mr. Dale's destiny was none other than the dirtiest, most woebegone looking tramp he had ever seen.

"Good morning, governor," the apparition hailed him. "Say, pardon me, governor, but listen, could you help a fellow out? I got a job on the docks in New York, an' I'm short o' cash. It's a hell of a long walk. Could you lend me a dollar for railroad fare?"

Dale laughed bitterly, a little hysterically. For a full minute mirth got the better of him.

"Funny, ain't it?" the tramp demanded. He took a menacing step toward the young man.

It was a lonely piece of road. On either side was woodland, stretching for a mile both ways. Dale, at a second glance, saw that his petitioner, beneath rags and dirt, was a pretty competent physical specimen. Finesse was advisable. Nevertheless, the humor of it struck him forcibly.

"No, you're not funny. I'm the comic bozo. Sit down, partner in distress, and let's talk it over," he invited, waving an elaborately courteous hand toward a fallen log by the roadside. He himself dropped wearily on one end of it.

The tramp surveyed him doubtfully, darkly. To his eyes, in turn, Dale's sturdy figure under well-cut and pressed clothes, was nothing to regard lightly. He therefore let a soft answer cover a touch of suspicious wrath.

"Trying to kid me?" he asked, with a mechanical grin.

"Not at all. Here's a dollar." Dale drew out a rumpled bill. "It's yours, if you think you need it worse than I do after we've talked things over a bit. I'm betting, too, you'll see something funny about it."

Hesitantly, the fellow obeyed, perching rigidly at the far end of the log, like a cat ready to spring. Dale watched closely for a possible move in his direction.

"Make it snappy," the tramp ordered.

"Fair enough," Dale conceded. "Well, it's this way. We've both got jobs, if we can get to them. Even up so far. You've got a job you're already dressed for. I've got a job that needs a new outfit of clothes. My job will be selling bonds. A dollar will take you to your job. My job's in Chicago. You can get at your job to-morrow morning, and doubtless, on the strength of it, get credit at a restaurant and rooming house on the docks. This dollar is all I've got to eat and sleep on to-night, to say nothing of getting some more clothes and getting to Chicago to-morrow.

"Now, then, I ask you, don't you think it is a little funny your asking me for money? And which of us, do you think, needs the dollar most?"

"That's easy to answer," the tramp replied with grim calm. "It ain't funny asking for money when you're doing it regular for a living. Gets tiresome. An' I'll say I need the dollar most, because it ain't any use to you at all. It won't get you to your job, an' it will get me to mine."

"There's something to that on the surface of it," Dale agreed, gravely; "but there's more to it than yet appears. I still have a fighting chance of getting the rest

of my money if I can keep fed and looking fairly decent till to-morrow. I have just one friend in New York I can borrow the money from. I heard he was at his country home here, and hitch-hiked out this morning to see him. I got here, only to find he'd gone into New York on the early train. So I am hitch-hiking back, now, hoping to catch him to-morrow."

"Aw, say, let's both quit the bull," the tramp protested, rising wearily. "I ain't got any job coming, an' you don't need one. I don't want your dirty dollar. What I'm after is a real bunch of kale that's buried around here—an' you can tell me where it is. So come across!"

The tramp had suddenly swooped down and picked up a stout bit of tree limb that lay near the log. He now held it menacingly over Dale's head.

That astonished young man arose gingerly, guarding his threatened head with a forearm.

"Wait a minute!" he exclaimed. "There's some mistake. What's this about buried money? I don't understand."

The tramp looked skeptical, in spite of Dale's evident bewilderment and sincerity.

"The hell you don't. What's a young swell like you doing out here in the country, prying around on foot if it ain't looking for kale? Nothing doing! Keep your dollar, but you lead me to the dough—and divvy when you find it. An' I'll stick to you like a little brother till you do. See?"

"But, man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Dale insisted. "Buried treasure! Have you been roped in by bunk of that sort?"

"That's all right, kid. Come across with the dope, now, and lead on to the kale."

But Dale was getting irritated.

"Say, listen, you!" he growled. "I'm through with this nonsense. Drop that stick, and go on about your business. I don't know what you're talking about, and I don't care. If I thought there was any money lying around here unclaimed, I'd be tickled to go halves with you."

"Is that so?" the tramp snorted, and took a menacing step toward him.

At that instant the grind of a motor car approaching in second speed came to their ears. The hobo stopped and listened.

"Maybe somebody else after the dough," he commented. "Not many gas-wagons over this road."

There was a hoarse honk of a horn, and a car rounded the bend, picking its way cautiously over the rutted, unfrequented byway. A fresh-cheeked, clear-eyed young woman sat alertly at the wheel.

"That's one of 'em, all right. I'll make her give up the dope," the tramp remarked, and started down the middle of the road toward the car, waving the club.

There was a squeal of brakes, and the girl brought the car to a halt a few feet from the menacing figure.

The fellow started toward the running board, but Dale was too quick for him. He leaped forward, and caught the hobo off his guard with a swift punch under the ear. The club fell from the fellow's hand, he crumpled up over a mud guard of the car, then slid off into the shallow ditch by the roadside.

## II

DALE turned from a brief inspection of his antagonist to the girl. Round eyed and a little pale, she sat grasping the wheel tensely and staring first at the tramp, then at her rescuer.

"You'd better move right on," Dale suggested, "before this fellow comes out of his doze."

The tramp was already showing signs of returning life.

"Thank you," the girl said, a little tremulously. "Perhaps you'd better get in, too. He looks vicious."

"I will, if you don't mind," Dale agreed, climbing into the roadster beside her. "I was hoping for a lift, anyhow."

"What was it all about?" she asked, as she put the car into gear again.

"As near as I can make out, he's one of the noble army of treasure hunters," Dale replied. "When I wouldn't point out the old oak at whose roots the iron box is buried, he got peevish. He was about to do a little stick work on my head when you came along, and he thought he'd try getting a clew out of you."

The girl laughed; a mellow ripple of music. Dale was finding her very pleasing to look at.

"How funny! I thought I was the only one who got the clew leading to this road. So there are three of us! Well, I suppose by the rules we become partners, now, share and share alike. We hardly need to divide with our hobo friend. Wonder how he got the tip!"



Dale looked at her in a perplexity which she misunderstood. For before he could ask her what she meant by this same mysterious hint at treasure with which the tramp had baffled him, she hastened to say, with a little laugh:

"Oh, don't look hurt. I wasn't implying that you had told him anything. You seemed quite able to handle the gentleman. We'll have to watch out that he doesn't follow us and try to take the money away if we find it. He would be rich with that thousand dollars, wouldn't he? Imagine!"

At the magic words, "thousand dollars," Dale started. It was like the mention of a beefsteak to a starving man.

Then there really was some story of a buried treasure afoot that this intelligent girl had taken seriously! It was something he was supposed to know about and had a right to share in!

This much he had concluded when it occurred to him that perhaps he had better not display his ignorance. Here might be some easy money—and, gosh, how he needed it!

Manifestly this expensively dressed young woman with her high-priced car didn't need it. She must be on the hunt for the lark of it. Who was she? What was it all about, anyhow?

Dale put on his best poker face, shut his mouth firmly, and awaited developments. The next step came at once.

"By the way," the girl remarked, "I can't seem to remember your name, though I suppose we've met at various places. You see, I've been away, and one meets so many new people when one comes back. I'm Marian Vance."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Vance," he replied, glibly. "I'm Wilbur Dale."

"Oh, wasn't it at the Proctor's weekend we met?" she asked, brightly.

"No. I wasn't there," he replied, truthfully. "Of course, I couldn't forget meeting Miss Vance, but, like yourself, I've been away, and have been meeting so many new people that I can't recall the time or place."

"Well, anyhow, we're here, and fate has made us partners in the hunt for the treasure."

Again Dale remained wisely silent.

Presently the girl looked back anxiously, then drew up beside the road and stopped.

"Good!" she exclaimed. "Nobody else in sight. Let's check up clews. Where did you leave your car?"

"Oh, I haven't any car," he began. Then it seemed that wasn't the right answer, judging from her look of surprise. "Cars will break down, you know. But, nothing daunted, I've been hitch-hiking on my way."

The girl grinned.

"That was lucky for me. You'd have found the next clew and beaten me to it. There are only single clews over each route from here on, so I'd have been out of it. Half the treasure's better than none. Now, if only nobody on the other routes is farther along, we've got a good fighting chance."

"Good!" Dale declared.

"I thought Tom Bangs was making it pretty complicated and not giving everybody chance enough when he fixed it that way, but I shouldn't complain now. Here's my clew. What's yours?"

She pulled a sheet of paper out of the flap of the car door and spread it on her knees. Dale glanced at it and read:

Go to the Road of Just Dues and at a turn of the way, search under the dead body of a forest king.

At that Dale suddenly saw a great light. This, then, was one of those society treasure hunts of which he had been reading so much in the newspapers. That morning he had glanced carelessly at an advance story in one of the papers. Miss Vance had just spoken of Tom Bangs. Dale recognized the name as that of a leader of the Long Island younger set.

There were several original features to this hunt, he recalled vaguely. He wished he had read the story carefully. He remembered the proceeds were to go to charity, and that entrants paid a small fee.

Now, here he was without money, and heir to a clew leading to one thousand dollars to be had by the finder.

And he needed the money.

### III

DALE considered for a moment what he should do. Naturally, he was a rank outsider, mistaken by this girl to be one of the authorized treasure hunters.

He should tell the girl she was mistaken, perhaps let her give him a lift as far as she went along his way.

But, on the other hand, she might need his protection. If it hadn't been for him, she would have lost her clew to that tramp,

and had an unpleasant experience in the bargain. Any respectable person had a right to buy a ticket to the treasure hunt. If he helped find the treasure, and claimed half of it, he could pay the fee afterward.

As for claiming half of it, this girl evidently didn't need the money—and he did.

But the girl, meantime, sat holding her cryptic clew and waiting for him to produce his. He decided to temporize by going on with the adventure, and deciding later the ethics of dividing the treasure, provided they found it.

He began feeling in his pockets, as if looking for a paper. Naturally, he failed to find it.

"I haven't got it!" he exclaimed, still literally truthful.

"Perhaps you left it in the car that gave you a ride," she suggested helpfully.

"Well, anyhow, it wasn't essentially different from yours," he hastened on. "How do you read this?"

"Why, 'Just Dues' means merit. This is the Merrit Road. But what does 'the dead body of a forest king' mean?"

Dale studied it carefully for a moment, then light dawned and he began to laugh.

"What's the joke, gay sir?" Miss Vance demanded.

"The joke is, festive lady, that as there is only one marked bend in this forsaken road, the forest king's body must be the log lying at that bend whereon I and your would-be assailant sat and parleyed, and near which we left him lying."

"Oh, my Heavens! Then we've got to go back and fight him after all."

"I like your editorial we. I may need help on the battle line. We're going back."

The girl backed the car around with some difficulty on the narrow road. Then, while Dale watched alertly ahead for some sign of their late foe, she drove slowly back toward the fateful bend and the forest giant's body.

A few minutes later they made the bend and came in sight of the log. Both heaved sighs of relief. The tramp was not in sight. But, as they drew a little nearer, the sighs of relief switched to gasps of chagrin.

The log had been rolled over! In a slight hollow in its old bed lay a tin box, its cover off, empty.

"Somebody got there first after all!" Dale exclaimed, as he leaped out.

"The tramp!" Miss Vance ejaculated.

"But the beggar didn't know where to look when we saw him last," Dale reasoned.

Undoubtedly the tin box had contained the clew. There was no sign of anything else in that line.

"Here are somebody's tracks leading off into the woods," the girl called.

Dale hurried over. The big, broken footprints might readily have been made by the tramp with his decrepit shoes. He followed the trail easily along the swampy ground, the girl picking her way after him.

"Do you think it's safe to leave the car alone?" Dale asked, looking back doubtfully.

"I don't think it safe to stay in the car alone with that big ruffian likely to pop out at me," she demurred.

"Hello! Look, here's something!" He stooped and picked up a bit of white letter paper no bigger than a dime, with inked lettering, a fragment of a word on one side. A little farther on he found another, then another and another.

He soon had a small handful, and appeared to have exhausted the supply of torn bits.

"Let's take them back to the car and piece them together," he suggested.

They had penetrated farther into the woodland than they thought in the preoccupation of picking up the scraps. The road was quite out of sight.

They had gone perhaps half the distance when they heard the car's starter buzz. For an instant they stared at each other in dismay. Then they broke into a run toward the sound.

But they were too late. They reached the roadside just in time to see the car disappearing around the bend, their shabby knight of the road at the wheel.

#### IV

THE girl stared at her vanishing car with such bewilderment, such helplessness, for an instant, that Dale confidently expected a flood of tears. He held his breath and fidgeted uneasily. He had no experience in comforting crying women, but he had a momentary impulse to take her in his arms and pet her.

But the girl wasn't the crying sort.

"Here!" she said, suddenly. "Where are those paper scraps? We've got to find out which way he is going."

She perched on the clew log, and Dale dropped down beside her.

"Let me take your hat," the girl said. "We can spread the scraps out on it."

On the flat crown of Dale's straw hat they began laboriously patching the pieces of the puzzle together. Two important scraps were missing, and they lost nearly half an hour re-searching the tramp's trail till they finally found them, mud-smear'd but still legible.

This is what they read when the puzzle was completely restored:

Go to a distant place where the babes sleep soundly. In earth where nothing grows dig ten feet, ten inches, straight north of the northeast corner of the commonest house.

Miss Vance vexedly gnawed the end of a bobbed strand of her auburn hair.

"This is a great help to the babes in the woods!" she decided.

"No wonder the bum tore it up!" Dale said, gloomily. "Anyhow, he should worry. He's got a car worth more than a thousand dollars."

"Where would babes sleep soundly?" the girl speculated. "In a nursery?"

"In a cemetery, perhaps," Dale suggested, morosely.

"We can't sit here, anyhow. Let's hike," she decided.

"We can follow the tramp's new car," Dale offered. "It leaves a clean track in this sandy road."

"You don't have any idea he'll work out that clew?" she remarked, incredulously.

"That fellow can scent money a long way. Didn't he smell this paper under the log?"

"That's so. I wonder how in the world he found it. Perhaps somebody else came along with a clew, and he took it away from them."

"Well, all we can do is hike on to the next village and ask where babes sleep soundest. They'll chuck us in a booby house, and our troubles will be over for to-day."

They walked on for a mile or more in gloomy silence. Merrit Road ended in a more pretentious highway, and the tramp's car tracks took a right turn, so they followed, not knowing what else to do.

A little way down this highway they came to the first house they had passed since leaving the log.

"I'll telephone the constable, or State

police, or some one, from here," Dale suggested.

"Good idea," she agreed.

A tired housewife answered his rap.

"Did you happen to see a man who looked like a tramp drive by here in a car a little while ago?" Dale asked.

"I should say I did!" she exclaimed. "The roughest-looking villain I ever saw. He was asking the way to the orphan asylum."

"Orphan asylum! That's it!" Dale shouted to Miss Vance. "That's where babies sleep, of course."

"Where is the asylum?" he asked the woman.

"Out near Westover. Go on to Walton village, a mile from here, and turn left at the four corners. It's a straight road ten miles from there, and you'll see the asylum on the hill beyond the town."

Getting permission to use the telephone, Dale notified the village constable of the theft of the car, and where the thief would probably be found. That official turned the matter over to the State police. A general alarm was sent out.

Fifteen minutes later the pair of treasure hunters were picked up by two troopers in a small touring car and whisked out to the orphan asylum.

The fussy elderly superintendent had been telephoned to by the police, and he was in a state of great excitement.

"We have seen no car answering the description you give," he averred. "But, on searching the grounds, we found a most extraordinary thing had occurred. During the noon hour, when no one was about, some person broke into the tool house, took a spade, and did extensive digging in the children's playground. We're all greatly disturbed by it. I can't imagine what any one would be up to."

"I can," Dale remarked aside to his companion. "May we look at this digging?" he added to the superintendent.

"It's certainly ground where nothing grows, as the clew said," Dale remarked to Miss Vance, as he looked at the well-worn playground. In one spot there was a large circle of newly turned over soil, as if some one had planned a flower bed.

"And the middle of that dug up spot is just about ten feet and ten inches from the 'commonest' house. It's the building where they eat. They call that the commons, don't they?" the girl said. "Looks

as though our friend had got his clew and gone."

"Guess that let's us out," Dale agreed. "Well, anyhow, I suppose we didn't really need the money, and I'd say he did."

"No, of course we didn't need the money," she agreed.

## V

"WELL, anyhow, it hasn't been a total loss from my standpoint, at least," Dale told the girl, as they sat together in the back seat of the State police car, on the way over to Garden City, where Miss Vance decided to take a train back to her home. "At least we've had a chance to get acquainted."

"Yes," she agreed. "It has been good fun."

She sighed deeply, and looked pensively off over the meadowland.

Dale studied her profile, and wondered what that sigh meant. It was a pleasant profile to study, one delicate arched eyebrow, dark silken lashes unbelievably long, a tiny nose, tip-tilted just enough to be interesting, a soft yet firm little chin.

He felt a sudden unruly desire to cup that chin in the palm of his hand and turn it his way. His pulse throbbed at the thought, but he resisted the mad impulse.

He suddenly found himself feeling a decided distaste for his Chicago job.

"The worst of it is," he went on, a little morosely, "I may not see you again for a long time. I sort of planned to go to Chicago to-morrow. I may not, though."

"I'd sort of planned to sail for Paris in a few days, but—but I may not," she echoed.

"Well," he went on boldly, "if my plans should change, couldn't I call on you before you sail? I'd like to know whether you get your car back."

"I'd love to have you," she responded, cordially. "You've been awfully kind. But, you see, I'll be away from New York visiting friends till I sail, if I do."

Dale sighed in turn. What business had he cultivating the friendship of a rich society girl? He had a strong desire to ask her to spend the rest of the day with him, but the thought of the single dollar bill in his pocket put an effectual damper on the notion.

"Just a case of ships that pass in the night," he told her with a grin meant to be cheerful.

"So you're going to Chicago," she commented. "I used to live there. I've got a lot of friends there. I love that town. Do you know anybody there?"

"Not a soul."

"I'll give you a note to my old chum, Dolly Crane. She knows everybody in Chicago worth knowing."

"That 'll be mighty kind," Dale agreed. But he knew he'd never use that card. Even as the prosperous bond salesman he hoped to be soon, he could hardly trail around with Marian Vance's friends.

"I almost wish I were going back to Chicago," she admitted, "instead of going to Europe, where I'll be cut off from all my old friends for so long."

"You're going to be gone long, then?" he asked, with a distinct sensation of sinking. As she spoke he had been indulging in a wild daydream of sudden prosperity that would enable him to run back to New York, say about the holiday time, and renew this pleasant acquaintance.

"I'll be gone two years, if I go. I plan to study art in Paris."

"So that's that. Well, if you come to Chicago after you come back, ask the mayor for my address. I'll get you to paint my portrait."

"Do you think your face is a fit subject for painting, vain man?"

"Not in comparison with some faces I've seen," he returned, meaningly.

She wrinkled up her nose at him. He experienced a delightful sensation in the region of the heart, followed by another sinking sensation at realizing that they were entering Garden City—and Marian Vance was about to flutter gaily out of his life.

One of the troopers turned to them. "I'll phone headquarters when we get to the railroad station, and see if there's any news of your car before you take your train."

Marian Vance's train was looming up in the distance when the trooper approached them with a triumphant grin.

"They've got your car. It was at Far Rockaway Beach. The guy that stole it saw the cop coming, and beat it."

## VI

"OH, I'm so relieved!" Miss Vance's face beamed. "And you've been such a jewel to stick by me and see me safely through this funny day."

The girl's pretty face had now come out



of its cloud, like sunrise on a misty summer morning.

"Come on, partner! You go with me to get it, if you aren't in a hurry."

She grabbed his hand and skipped gayly over to the police car, Dale in tow.

"You bet I'm not in a hurry!" he told her as they settled down in the back seat again.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we found the treasure stowed away in the back of the car when we got there?" she suggested.

"Don't mourn over that treasure any more," he comforted, venturing to give her hand a swift, casual pat. "We've got all the afternoon ahead of us for adventuring. Maybe we'll come upon orchards full of diamond trees before night."

Again Dale had quite forgotten the lone dollar in his pocket, and his need of raising funds before midnight.

She laughed delightedly.

"You're an adventurer after my own heart," she exclaimed.

"I wish I could capture it!" Dale thought, but didn't say it.

"I do hate to give up that treasure, though!" she sighed. "It isn't the money, of course. It's the sporting principle of the thing. I hate to give up anything I go after."

"Yes, indeed it isn't as if we needed the money," he agreed, hypocritically.

"What would you have done with your half of the treasure if we had found it?" she asked.

"I'd invite you to a most amazing party this evening, and spend every cent of it," he replied. "What would you do with yours?"

"I'd buy a gown to go to your party in," she laughed. "Oh, I'd do it up right. You'd be proud of me. I'd get a pearl necklace, too, and a diamond tiara, and several nice gaudy new finger rings."

She spread her dainty little ringless fingers on her knee and smiled at him quite impishly.

"I believe, before you got through, you'd spend your whole five hundred," he laughed.

He was wondering if the girl were secretly mocking him.

"I suppose a mere five hundred dollar party is a piker proposition to this girl," he thought.

Aloud he said: "Funny thing about money, relative thing purely, you know.

Now, to some of us, this mere thousand would mean just a night's sport, and kind of cramp our style at that. And to this tramp, it's a fortune."

"Don't let's talk about money," she shuddered. "I hate it."

"And that's that!" he thought.

They drifted into desultory banter until the cottages and hotels of Far Rockaway Beach loomed into sight.

"Far Rockaway! Far Rockaway!" the girl chanted. "Pretty name. Why—say!"

She stopped, suddenly thoughtful. She looked in her bag.

"Where is that first clew again?" she asked herself, searching.

"You left it in the door pocket of your car," he reminded her.

"That's how the tramp discovered the first clew," she declared. "You left yours in your car that broke down, and he came along and found it, and got to the log the same time you did."

Dale blushed. He had forgotten that he had given her the idea that he had a car and a clew.

"That might be a way," he admitted lamely. "But what did you have in mind?"

"Why, that second clew, as I remember it, spoke of a distant place where babies sleep soundly. 'Distant' is 'Far.' Babies sleep soundly when they're rocked. 'Rock-away' is Far Rockaway, of course! The tramp tried the asylum first, and then thought of this."

"What could be fairer than that?" Wilbur Dale remarked. "And there's plenty of ground around here where nothing grows—sand. It's the place, all right, and the tramp has beaten us to it again! Still, there's always hope. Let's hike out now and look for the commonest house, whatever that would be."

At the police station, Marian Vance identified her car, and took it to a garage. Then they started off to view the beach and the street back of it in search of the cryptic building.

"By the way, we really need a compass and tape measure," Dale suggested.

He dropped into a little notion store which they were passing, and luckily found cheap examples of both articles.

Dale studied the fronts of cottages, hotels, and stores helplessly, in search of the "commonest house."

"The confounded things are all common enough," he told Marian Vance, "but it would take a vote of the Academy of Arts to decide which was commonest."

Marian, with her artistic instinct, kept picking likely candidates, only to find another a few numbers along that seemed more eligible.

They were out in the edge of the place at last near the beach, with the town pretty well combed and no selection made.

"It's a wild goose chase," Dale decided, morosely.

"A wild house chase, you mean."

Dale grinned, and took one despairing glance around. A little way off, his eye fell on a grown man of lusty build, his back toward them, digging in the sand industriously with a child's shovel. This aroused Dale's curiosity, and he called the girl's attention to it.

As they stood watching him, Dale began to note something vaguely familiar in the fellow's movements and figure.

"I've seen that chap before," he whispered. "But where?"

"Why, so have I!" Marian exclaimed. Then she clutched Dale's elbow excitedly.

"Why, it's our own tramp, all dressed up! And he's digging for the treasure!" she almost shouted.

"So it is!" Dale agreed. "Watch him. I'll run for a life guard."

By good luck, Dale found a sturdy specimen a few rods down the beach, and didn't have to waste any time awaking him to action.

"Judas Priest!" the bronzed giant roared. "I want to see that bird, too. Some guy busted into Budlow's bath house an hour ago and swapped clothes and money with another gink. Bet this is him."

It was a foot race between Dale and the guard to the sand digger, the guard winning. But they arrived a minute late. The tramp looked up from his work, and saw the speeders coming his way. He glanced toward the girl standing as sentinel over him, and appeared suddenly to recognize her.

With an oath calculated to curl the bobbed hair of even a sophisticated modern young woman, he threw down his toy shovel and fled between two buildings.

Dale and the guard deployed about the little hotel in front of which the man had been digging. But he was nowhere in sight.

The guard hailed a policeman, and enlisted him in the chase. Dale returned to Marian Vance.

"Look!" she exclaimed, pointing up at the front of the hotel. "He guessed right this time, but I don't think he's found it yet. See, that's the commonest house, all right."

Dale looked at the battered and weathered sign over the front door of the little caravansary.

It read: Smith's Hotel.

## VII

MARIAN VANCE's guess that the tramp, when disturbed, had not yet found either the treasure or another clew proved correct in both particulars.

Dale, with his compass and tape, ran a line from the northeast corner of this "commonest house" ten feet, ten inches, out over the beach sand where, for a certainty, "nothing grew."

The tramp had evidently surveyed with a crude method, for he had missed the spot by three feet.

Marian Vance began digging excitedly with the tramp's discarded shovel. Two feet down in the soft sand, metal clinked against metal, and Marian drew out another box similar to the one found under the log by the roadside.

Her face fell a little as she opened the box. This wasn't the treasure yet. But it was another clew. The paper that fluttered out of the box read:

Take the strongest liquid ginger at a bar that closes at 4:17 P.M. Dig where the old man with a triple headed spear kisses the black stone.

"Worse and more of it," Dale groaned. "This is the toughest yet."

"Liquid ginger," Marian Vance mused. "Liquid ginger! That's some kind of prohibition hooch they sell around here. I suppose maybe the next clew will be at this bar. But what a funny hour to close! I presume this old man with the spear is Neptune, and probably has his face painted on a sign over an inn door or something."

"We might inquire around here if there is any such bar," Dale agreed. "But what gets me is this closing time. No bar in the world closes at such an odd hour as four seventeen in the afternoon."

"I'm not so well posted on bars," Marian admitted, "but it doesn't sound at all reasonable."

"Why, say!" Dale cried brightly after several moments of thought. "Around the seashore the word 'bar' is quite as likely to mean sand bar as it is a drinking place—sand bar, for instance."

"That's so. Then, maybe it means a sand bar that's flooded by high tide at four seventeen this afternoon."

"Yes. And this Neptune idea might be figurative, too. Maybe there's a black rock on the bar that is just lapped at high tide. But where would you go to find it unless it's well known around here, I can't imagine."

"Oh, I see it now!" Marian exclaimed. "Liquid ginger! Jamaica Bay! This bar is somewhere in Jamaica Bay."

"Hurray! Of course that's it!" Dale shouted. "It's a sand bar in Jamaica Bay that's shut off from the mainland at high tide, this afternoon. And it has a black rock on it. Now the question is, how'll we get out to the blooming little island?"

"Hire a motor boat," Marian decided with an air of "No sooner said than done."

Wilbur Dale felt cold chills hurdling his spine.

"Good Lord!" he groaned within himself. "Me with sixty cents, and, of course, I'll be expected to pay motor boat hire that, I presume, comes to about a million a minute!"

He did some quick and heavy thinking without arriving anywhere in particular.

"All right," he agreed glibly, sparring for time. "I'll go look one up."

"No. Better let me do that, if you don't mind," Marian suggested. "You can get around, and inquire about sand bars and how to trap them, a lot better than I can. We'll save time that way."

"All right," he acquiesced. "Er—let me give you the money for it."

"Indeed not!"

"Uh—my half at least."

"Oh, we can settle later. We don't know how much it will be. I'm all right."

She was off before he had time to argue. And how willing he was not to argue the point!

Among the fishermen on the water front he made inquiries, at first without results. But, at length, one old fellow pricked up his ears.

"Why, I know that bar. Got a hunk o' granite on it half's big as a house. Looka here, I ain't got nuthin' but a rowboat, but I aim to go fishin' this afternoon. You

tow my boat out, an' I'll show you where 'bouts it is."

This was unexpected good luck. Wilbur hurried back to the dock where he was to meet Marian. He found her in temporary possession of a seedy-looking motor boat that inspired no great confidence in Wilbur's breast. Marian appeared to be a competent sailor, judging from the businesslike way in which she juggled levers and wheels, to the mystification of Dale, a chronic landsman.

"We'd better get right away," she told him when he reported what he had found. "There may be a bunch of others on the same trail by now."

"I think that's a good idea. It's two o'clock now."

"Oh, my goodness! And we haven't had a thing to eat. I suppose you're hungry. A man always is. Shall we stop for lunch?"

Here was another crisis in Wilbur Dale's young life. He could fairly feel his sixty cents shrinking in his pocket. But it was manifestly up to him to invite the lady to luncheon. She was unquestionably looking at him now with pointed suggestion. More rapid thinking.

"Why, I'll tell you," he suggested with sudden inspiration. "Suppose I get some lunch that we can eat aboard. We really ought not to take time to stop at a restaurant. Do you think so?"

"I guess you're right," she agreed. "I warn you, though, I'm as hungry as a bear."

"What would you like?" he invited tremulously.

"Oh, I love caviar sandwiches, with a lettuce-and-pimento sandwich as salad, and a pistache ice cream cone for dessert, with a bottle of iced coffee."

"Which would shoot about three bucks away at any seashore eating place," Wilbur thought gloomily to himself as he strolled off, jingling his sixty cent estate in his pocket.

He carefully avoided any possibly expensive place, and slipped into a cheap lunch counter where he guessed he could get the most filling quantity of food for his money.

Fifteen minutes later he returned to the boat, brazenly bearing two second-rate ham sandwiches, two of wilted lettuce, two diminutive vanilla ice cream cones, and a bottle of lukewarm, muddy fluid supposed

to be iced coffee. Wilbur had never before in his life stretched money so far.

He thought it would be wise not to display his menu until after the voyage was under way, and it was too late to order him back to change it.

For the moment, however, Dale had something else to think about more thrilling than lunch, if not quite so vital. Marian, doubtless, was as clever a motor boat driver as she admitted she was. But this seaworn craft, by some humorist misnamed *The Dart*, failed to give her a fair opportunity to display her talents.

The *Dart* suggested its prototype neither in form, speed, nor accuracy. Wilbur suspected, however, that it might prove fully as deadly.

The snub-nosed little boat's engine started with a roar like a rapid-fire gun, but there were no other results. Marian discovered the clutch hadn't taken hold. She remedied this. Then, as the *Dart* backed into a boat moored behind her, it raked a slimy anchor rope up Wilbur's back.

Nothing daunted, the girl put the clutch in order, untangled her craft from the other boat, and at last the *Dart* wallowed out into the narrow channel like a mud turtle in distress.

But their boat had independent notions as to what a rudder meant. They collided with other craft four separate times before they reached the dock of their fisherman pilot and took his boat in tow. By now, however, Marian had learned a little of the *Dart's* peculiar habits, and made better headway out of the channel into the bay.

All seemed to go well, when suddenly the *Dart* decided to turn to the right of the channel buoy instead of to the left, and couldn't be talked out of it. With a tired sigh, the craft settled its nose in a mud bank, and stayed there, protesting violently.

Marian, after ten minutes of ineffectual struggle, shut off the gas and turned to Wilbur and the placid fisherman with a rueful grin.

"Now where do we go?" she asked.

"You stay right here for about half an hour, till the tide h'ists you off," the fisherman told her.

"In that case, let's eat," she proposed, resignedly, reaching for Wilbur's package.

The wash from a passing boat threw a shower of spray over the *Dart's* stern, drenching Dale.

"If you will pardon the seeming idle curiosity of a drowning man," Dale remarked, "why did you pick out this particular monster of the deep?"

"There was nothing else available at the moment," she told him, balancing a rough and semiready sandwich on an inadequate little palm, "and, if you will pardon the idle curiosity of a starving woman, why did you pick out this particular lunch?"

"There was nothing else available at the moment," he echoed.

Both were hungry and irritated, and, for the rest of the impromptu meal, had little to say to each other.

True to the fisherman's prophecy, the *Dart* finally picked itself off the mud bank and drifted about aimlessly until Marion got the engine going again. Then once more they moved on into deep water at a sluggish pace.

"I hope the confounded thing doesn't try diving," Wilbur ventured.

"There's no chance for us if we fall in the water—after eating those sandwiches," Marian retorted.

A little farther on there was the sound of a siren and a shout from behind, and a swift boat slid by with a party of a dozen merrymakers.

Wilbur noted something personal in the jeers that came from them as they passed. Marian replied with defiant grunts from the *Dart's* foghorn.

"You know the Disbrows, and Talmages, and Duanes, of course," she remarked to Dale.

He saw that, of course, he ought to know them.

"They are nice people," he evaded.

"I hate 'em," Marian laughed. "They'll probably get our treasure away from us."

By which Wilbur inferred that this boat load was a company of fellow treasure hunters. Within the next fifteen minutes other boats appeared, going purposefully in the same general direction as the girl and Dale were.

"There are the Fullers and the Tenbrooks," she told him.

"And I declare, if Tom Paul isn't on it, too," she added a moment later.

"Hello, Mrs. Northrop!" she hailed another boat.

"Well, if there isn't Marian Vance!" shouted a dapper young man in another passing craft.



"Hello, Marian!" came a chorus from the other man and two girls with him.

"Where'd you find the scow?" one demanded.

Wilbur was feeling more and more embarrassed and out in the cold with each encounter. He was afraid the girl would discover that he didn't appear very well acquainted with the members of his social set.

But several boats passed whose occupants the girl did not greet. She didn't know everybody herself. That gave him a happy thought.

He began gayly hailing such parties, trusting that the half-hearted response wouldn't be so pointed as to arouse Marian's suspicion.

But his shipmate was too disturbed by the number of rivals, who were in on what was probably the last lap of the hunt, to be noticing him closely, and the location to which the clew pointed seemed to be near at hand, judging from the general converging of the craft about a quarter of a mile ahead of them.

Their pilot presently confirmed this suspicion.

"Right ahead there, in the center o' that flock o' boats, is the bar you're after. So, if you'll let me off here, I'll do a leetle fishing."

Marian stopped the boat, and the fisherman clambered over the side into his skiff and cast off. But when she attempted to start the Dart again, the engine positively and finally refused to turn over.

After ten minutes of futile cranking, turn and turn about, they both sank back, exhausted. The tumult and shouting of warring treasure hunters about the sand bar came to their ears.

But, as they watched, the gap between them and their fellow searchers steadily widened. The tide was carrying the Dart swiftly away from the black rock where the treasure lay.

### VIII

For a long minute the disconsolate couple sat staring at the bobbing group of boats. The passengers had alighted on the little islet with the black rock in the center, all that the rising tide had left of the low narrow sand bar. Marian and Wilbur could see their heads bobbing up and down as the amateur adventurers combed the wet sand for the treasure.

"That patch of sand must be covered about two layers deep with people already," Wilbur remarked. "If the tide rises much higher a lot of 'em will get wet feet."

Marian glanced at her wrist watch.

"It's almost time for high tide there now," she noted. "According to the clew, the exact spot will be marked by the peak of the tide, I should say. That'll be in just fifteen minutes."

Another motor boat chugged up toward the bar at this moment.

"Anybody found it yet?" the man at the wheel called to those on the bar.

"Not yet," came the reply.

Marian Vance jumped to her feet with an air of determination.

"Look here, Wilbur Dale, we're not licked yet!" she exclaimed. "I'm going to make another try at this engine. You keep out of the way. Get in the stern, and see if you can scull the boat with that oar."

Wilbur grinned at the girl's commanding tones. Somehow he liked to be bossed by her.

While Marian struggled with the engine again, he put the heavy oar in the stern oarlock and began thrusting the heavy old tub forward an inch at a time.

It was a strenuous job, and Wilbur was unused to hard physical exertion. Sweat oozed from him. His back began to ache, and the muscles of his arms and legs began to tie themselves in knots.

"I'm getting all wet," he called to Marian, over his shoulder. "I've got a crick in my back, a spring in my knee, and a notion in my head."

"Don't try to be funny!" she snapped. "Can't you see I'm suffering?"

Gradually he was gaining on the tide that now slackened at the full. The crowd ashore was busy searching.

On Dale struggled, little by little. The engine still failed to work.

At length, Wilbur nosed the Dart up to the nearest boat moored against the bar. He lifted the oar to reach out and pull the Dart in alongside the other craft.

The oar slipped out of his tired fingers and floated away. While he was frantically reaching over the gunwale in an effort to recover it, the Dart was caught by the returning tide. When he looked up again, there was a wide space of deep water between him and the steep face of the rock on the bar.

Wilbur Dale couldn't swim a stroke. He wondered if the girl could.

Marian looked up at this moment.

"Oh, good Lord!" she groaned, when she realized what had happened.

Wilbur knew, by the way she looked at that gap of water, that she, too, could not swim. He also realized that she was furious with him.

"You are a nice dependable young man, I must say," she told him, dropping back on the seat and going at the engine again, now with redoubled energy.

"Can't even be depended on to buy a sandwich," he heard her mutter.

"Of course, I couldn't expect to get as good results with oars and sandwiches as you do with a gas engine," Dale remarked. "But I did get some kind of a sandwich, and I made the oar work as long as it abided with me."

Silent contempt was her answer.

"Why don't you try a little lip stick on it?" he asked, resentfully.

She shot him a venomous glance.

"I certainly do regret inviting you along," she blazed. "You might at least have the decency to be silent."

"You are quite right," he admitted, suddenly humble at remembering his true position in the case. "I apologize."

The face of Marian Vance was decidedly pretty when she was animated. No normal young man could stay resentful at her very long.

"See here," Wilbur Dale suggested soothingly. "Don't fret any more over that confounded engine. Some one will tow us back."

"Hello, there!" he shouted. "Somebody bring us a tow."

The group on the bar paused in their search for a moment, and looked toward the drifting motor boat.

"What's the matter?" one man demanded.

"Engine trouble."

A chorus of merry laughter greeted this.

"Sorry, old thing, but if that's all the trouble, we're too busy just now," one voiced the sentiment of the crowd.

"Two less to split the treasure with," another added.

More laughter followed.

"A nice bunch of sports, I must say!" Wilbur growled, turning to Marian.

But she was silent this time, her face turned away from him.

"Miss Vance!" Wilbur ventured, with tenderness in his voice that he hadn't intended at all.

No answer came.

He leaned forward with sudden boldness and peered around at her face in time to surprise two tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I'm terribly sorry," he said, "but cheer up. We probably wouldn't have found the confounded treasure anyhow. It isn't as if we needed the money."

She dashed the telltale tears away with the back of her hand, thereby adding a picturesque streak of engine grease to her cheeks, and turned to him with a rueful smile.

"But," she told him, "you see, the trouble is that I really do need the money."

## IX

THE instant she spoke, Marian's expression showed so plainly that she regretted the impulse that Wilbur had the guilty feeling of an eavesdropper. He made a gallant attempt to laugh it off as a joke, and hastily changed the subject.

"I know," he remarked. "It does come in handy in a heavy bridge season when the cards run against you. But I always figure, when I lose on one gamble, I make up on another. You'll probably be lucky at the races this year."

Marian smiled frankly now.

"You talk like a fellow sufferer. It's a fact, I haven't been very lucky at bridge lately. You know how fathers are about gambling debts."

"I suggest you call on pater for an extra allowance for some pet charity this month, and let it go at that."

"Those things are done," she smiled.

"Now let's wipe the treasure off the slate and forget it, and figure how we are going to get out of this mess."

"Sure, we don't want to spend the summer here in this Noah's ark, even if it does keep us out in the open air. Besides, we've got to plan on landing once in awhile, anyhow, so I can buy more and better ham sandwiches."

Again the adorable tiptilted nose made a gesture of playful disdain. But Wilbur had the uncomfortable feeling that there was something more back of this girl's need of money than mere bridge debts. Memory of his attempt to dupe her into sharing any treasure found, filled him with shame.

"We needn't worry," he comforted her.

"There'll be a fishing boat or something else by here almost any minute, and they'll be glad to give us a tow. Meantime, let me try another crack at that motor. I'm not much good at such things, but I might make a lucky shot."

Marian was either comforted or successfully hiding her feelings now; he couldn't tell which. She sat on the gunwale, scanning the sea for possible rescuers. But, as he looked up from the refractory motor, he caught her stealing a speculative glance at him, a performance exactly duplicating his own. He dared not flatter himself that the young lady was duplicating his thoughts.

"I swear you are the loveliest creature I've ever seen!" Wilbur was thinking. "Something tells me I'm falling for you hard. Heaven bless the treasure hunt as far as it has gone. And bless that old tramp who got me into it. But confound Paris and Chicago!"

Neither the motor nor the horizon yielded anything in the way of rescue. Several times boats came within distant hail, but their occupants apparently took frantic waving and halloos as mere friendly salutes. They waved back casually and went on their way.

So the rest of the afternoon drifted away. Wilbur kept up an inconsequential banter, partly to keep the girl cheered up, and partly to steer the conversation away from personal topics, which might prove decidedly embarrassing to himself.

To his efforts the girl responded gallantly. More and more her ready wit and charm delighted him. Wilbur was fussy about women. He had an aversion for the more advanced type of modern girl, but Miss Vance was a revelation.

This girl, he decided, was not one of the hard-boiled type. He hadn't supposed New York society girls were so unaffectedly charming.

"Good Lord!" he thought. "I've got to snap out of this. Here I'm falling in love with a girl who wouldn't look at me for a minute if she knew I had no more social standing than a billy goat."

Once, toward evening, Marian shed a ray of hope into his gloomy heart.

"Wilbur Dale," she said, "I like your sort. So few men in society are like you. You know how to be a real pal with a girl."

"For this encouragement, much thanks," he replied. "And may I say that I not

only like your sort of girl, but you in particular."

"Now, Mr. Dale, you're getting really personal," she laughed lightly.

But she gave his face a grave, searching look, and saw there only deference. And, for reward, he received a bewitching smile.

But when sunset came and found them still afloat far from land, the situation became more difficult to treat lightly. A heavy cloud bank and a rising wind drove other boats to shelter.

But still the Dart wallowed on, showing no tendency to drift inshore. In fact, just before darkness closed over them the malicious craft headed into a wide channel, and took its center straight toward the open sea.

"It looks as though we were both going to Paris," Wilbur remarked.

Marian laughed a little hysterically.

"It looks as if I might never get to Paris," she sighed. Then she was silent for a long time, and he did not venture to ask personal questions about her plans.

"I'm very much afraid we're in for a bad night of it," he confessed at last.

She shivered a little. He took off his coat and placed it over her shoulders.

"No!" she protested. "You'll be cold. I'm all right. Let's sit down low where the gunwale will keep the wind off us."

He settled beside her, and held the coat firmly over her shoulders.

"Well, we'll compromise, if you insist, and put it lengthwise over both our shoulders," she suggested.

He obeyed, and they huddled close together, elbows touching, and again were for a long time silent.

"Listen," Dale said at last. "I've got to tell you something. I'm glad we didn't find that treasure. If we had I might have been tempted to play a mean trick on you and let you divide it with me."

Then he poured out the whole story of his dire need of money, and the accident that brought them together.

"You see, I've come to like you so well that I don't think I could have gone through with it," he explained. "But, if you knew how much I needed that money, you wouldn't blame me altogether."

The girl turned toward him a face he could barely see now in the darkness.

"But I do know," she said. "When I said I needed the money, I meant it just as much as you did. I have a confession

to make, too. I don't rightly belong in the treasure hunt any more than you do!"

## X

"You don't what?" Wilbur Dale demanded, after a moment of doubt as to whether he had heard aright.

"I'm as much an outsider as you are," Marian Vance revealed. "I'm nothing but a private tutor for the Stoddard children, near Garden City. I've been around among the family's guests so much that I'm quite familiar with society people and their chatter. That's all.

"I've been wishing to go to Paris to study art for a long time. I've even had my passport for a year. But I never seemed able to get money enough ahead.

"Well, the Stoddards bought some tickets for this hunt, and gave me one to use if I cared to. They're very nice to me, and let me use one of their old cars. Imagine how I felt when it was stolen!

"So I had great hopes that I might find the treasure, and be able to go to Paris at last. But now I'm worse off than ever. I hadn't any money with me to speak of, but I felt so sure when we got the Rock-away clew that I left the car with the boatman as security. And now it looks as if I'd lost the car, and the boat, and us!"

Miss Vance's aristocratic poise gave way at last. Suddenly, Wilbur Dale, for the first time in his life, found that he had a weeping woman in his arms.

For a long time they sat thus while the Dart lumbered up and down over the rollers. It became evident, however, that the little tub had swung out of the main channel into a cove, where they were protected from the sweep of the open sea.

In the long hours of the night, Wilbur Dale and Marian Vance found many things to talk about. If there was anything in the history of either untold by dawn, it was of little importance and somehow overlooked.

Just before daylight they were disturbed by a slight bump against the stern of the Dart, followed by a persistent rubbing as of wood on wood. When it was light enough to see, they found, nosing up under the stern of the Dart, the bow of a little skiff. Evidently the same tidal current had brought both crafts from the bay to this cove. There was a pair of oars in the skiff.

"Saved at last!" Wilbur exclaimed. "I can row this thing. We'll leave the Dart

anchored here, and be back in port in a couple of hours. Some unlucky soul left his boat on the beach, and the tide carried it off."

When they climbed into the small boat, Wilbur found a man's coat in the stern.

"Hello, here's a clew to the owner," he remarked, poking in the pockets.

The first thing he drew out was a slip of paper of familiar shape and color, and on it, in familiar typing, were these words:

From the black rock, go due east till you come to the first dry land. Dig there at low tide and find the treasure.

"The final clew!" Wilbur cried. "Then all they had buried by the black rock was this clew, not the treasure itself. Some chap in a rowboat found it."

"But that doesn't mean anything to us," Marian mourned. "He's had time to get the money and spend it. Let's call it a day, and go home."

As he rowed back down the broad stretch of Jamaica Bay, Wilbur had plenty of opportunity for uninterrupted thinking. Marian, exhausted by her long vigil, slept peacefully in the boat's stern.

The burden of Dale's thought was this: Marian wouldn't be going to Paris now, not for awhile yet. He wasn't going to lose her right away, at least. He must never lose her.

But how was he going to help it? If he took his job in Chicago, he'd be separated from her almost as effectually as if she went to Paris. If he stayed in New York, he might not get a job for months. In that case, poverty would bar him from Marian as hopelessly as distance.

He was still mulling over this dilemma when the sand bar with the black rock came in sight. He swung the skiff until he found himself in a line due east from the black rock.

Sure enough, just ahead of him was the hump of a sand bar, the rest of which was slowly being laid bare by the receding tide. He studied it over his shoulder as he slowly approached.

Suddenly he stopped, aghast. There, on the highest part of the sand hump, lay the body of a man.

Wilbur glanced fearfully at Marian. She still slept soundly. If this should be a dead man, he must not shock her by the gruesome sight. It was, nevertheless, his humane duty to investigate.



As he drew cautiously nearer he received a second shock. He recognized the recumbent form as that of their tramp, who had haunted them all through this strange adventure. This fellow, then, had followed the adventure through to the bitter end of his hopes.

Dale rowed into the shallows, a few yards from the body. And now he knew unmistakably that death had spared the hobo. The air vibrated with regular snores of amazing volume.

It took little guessing to piece things together. The tramp was in shirt sleeves. The coat in the skiff matched the man's trousers. The boat, then, was his.

Apparently, then, the tramp had found his way to the island with the black rock, ahead of the rest, and secured the single clew left there. But, while he was digging, the tide had risen and carried off his boat.

Was it possible that the treasure had not yet been found? If found, the finder had been marooned with it, and was at the mercy of the law. What would be the ethics of the case if Wilbur should take the treasure away from him?

The questions did not have to be answered. Wilbur quietly pulled up on the bar, and stepped lightly out.

He almost stumbled over the head of a small keg, probably uncovered by the last tide. The tramp evidently had not yet

reached this spot in his digging when the tide drove him to higher ground.

With trembling hands, Wilbur put the keg aboard the skiff, pushed off to a safe distance, and awoke Marian.

They had to go ashore to get Marian's automobile tools to open the keg. From it they drew out an oilskin package containing one thousand dollars in yellow bills.

The treasure was theirs at last.

"Here you are, Marian," Wilbur said, thrusting the bills into her hands. "Now you can go to Paris."

"But half of it is yours," she insisted.

"Not by a keg full," he objected.

"You'll need it all in Paris."

"But I won't take more than half. I won't go to Paris. You take your half and go to Chicago."

"I tell you what let's do," Wilbur suggested at last. "Keep it all in the family, and both go to Chicago."

And so it was arranged.

When the tramp was awakened and arrested, he confessed that he had entered the library of Tom Bangs, director of the hunt, the night before the affair, and stolen copies of all the clews. He had done the hardest day's work in his life in trying to puzzle out the hidden meanings, and he welcomed a sentence to prison, where he wouldn't have to use his brain.

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### THESE FOR YOUR EYES

THESE for your eyes:

So shall the words ascend

To Paradise,

O most beloved friend,

And if some happy words

Against your breast,

Hushed in the golden rooms

Of your deep dream,

Might come to rest,

The holy places where your spirit blooms,

And be companions of the thoughts that throng

The portals of your being—

O happy song,

O happy, happy words,

Caught up like golden birds

Into your heaven,

Far up beyond our seeing:

Lady that walks in Paradise,

These for your eyes.

*Richard Leigh*

# —And Now a Wife

THIS MAN SET OUT ON A STILL-HUNT FOR A MATE, AND  
DISCOVERS THAT HE IS BEING STALKED  
FOR THE SAME PURPOSE

By M. E. Chase

**H**ARRY MALDEN started life poor, but determined to accomplish three things before he died. He would make a name for himself as a lawyer, take a trip around the world, and then—marry some attractive young woman, and settle down.

Now, on the eve of his fortieth birthday, he sat smoking in his club lounge, contemplating matrimony. Chester Hardin, his nephew and junior bar associate, rushed up to him.

"Gosh, but it's good to see you again, Uncle Harry!" Chester greeted him. "When did you get in?"

"This afternoon. How are you, anyway, Chester?" Malden responded warmly, as they wrung hands.

"Well, the trip has certainly done you good; you're looking fine. Perhaps you're a little heavier?" Chester asked.

"Yes, I guess I tip the scales at around one hundred and eighty, now—too much for my five feet, eight." Malden slapped his paunch.

"Oh, you're all right." Chester drew up a chair. "Well, tell me, did you find her a wonderful old world?"

"Yes, great trip," his uncle agreed.

"Been clear around her! Lord, I'd give a good deal to see a little bit of Europe, even," Chester went on.

"Oh, you will, some day," Malden assured him; then asked: "Is Ward here?"

"Yes, down in the barber shop. I'll send word down that you're here."

Presently John Ward, a senior law partner, joined them, and, after an exchange of greetings, they went in to dinner, where talk quickly drifted to business.

"Oh, by the way, a new wrinkle developed in the Burlington estate a month

after you left Paris, and may mean sending some one over again to stay on the ground until the estate is finally settled," John Ward told Malden.

"You couldn't hurt my feelings by sending me," Chester suggested.

"You need a few more years of experience before you are ripe for such a mission, my boy," Malden said, grasping his nephew's arm affectionately.

Conversation shifted from the Burlington estate to the Weber-Henderson divorce suit, and Chester remarked:

"We have certainly come in for our share of divorce cases while you were away."

"What seems to be the rock that is wrecking so many matrimonial crafts this season?" Malden asked, almost seriously.

"Oh, the same old thing—incompatibility, which seems to be everything in general and nothing in particular," Chester told him.

"The result of couples meeting to-day and marrying to-morrow, before they have had time to know each other, I suppose," Malden reasoned. "It should make you watch your step, Chester."

"It should make me watch your step, you mean, Uncle Harry. These old hard-shelled bachelors are apt to do some strange things when they do fall."

"But haste isn't always the cause," Chester went on; "for instance, we got a divorce, just this month, for the youngest Forest girl from Ray Clark, and they had known each other since they were small children."

"You can't really know any woman until you have lived under the same roof with her," Ward said. "Then you get to know her in a surprisingly short time."

"Yes, but with a strictly conventional gentleman like Uncle Harry, who would frown upon trial marriage, such knowledge comes too late to be of any real value," Chester laughed.

"Yes, Harry," Ward added, "the woman you bank on being a comfort in your old age too often turns out to be a thorn in your side."

"Well, viewing matrimony from an attorney's office is certainly discouraging to a cautious bachelor like me," Malden agreed with attempted lightness.

"On the other hand, you must take into consideration," Ward went on, "there comes a time in a bachelor's life when club life is pretty empty."

"Well, perhaps being a little lonesome at times is better than running a chance of having a continual thorn in your side," Malden retorted.

"Why not lessen that chance by capturing a few specimens of womankind, put them in a glass case for a period, and observe their habits closely, as one studies specimens of bugs," was Chester's bright idea.

"No, that wouldn't do the stunt," Ward amended, "for no woman who sees she is being watched, is ever her natural self. But I'll tell you what, you might open up a boarding house, and in that way live under the same roof with your specimens with perfect propriety."

"And give particular attention to them at breakfast, where they are most apt to display their real dispositions," the experienced Ward went on; "but keep out of sight yourself."

"Suppose one didn't care for the type of women who migrate to boarding houses," Malden demurred.

"Yes, I know what you mean," Ward said, "but it is possible to take the curse off of the boarding house idea by dubbing yours a lodge, or a manor—that would give it the grand air and bring in the élite."

"And," he went on, "I don't know but that I'd pursue that very course myself, if I were to marry again. Think it over, Harry; it's really time you took the step."

"The old Perkins mansion, out on the North Shore, would be just the place for your manor, Uncle Harry," Chester volunteered helpfully.

"Is that vacant?" Malden asked.

"Yes, I'll drive you out in the morning to look it over," Ward laughed. "And lit-

tle Chester, here, will stand by, ready to take one of your left-over specimens."

All three laughed heartily at the ruse they had devised against "the weaker sex."

During the rest of the meal, Chester and John Ward noticed that Malden seemed preoccupied, but never dreamed their bantering suggestions had anything to do with it. And several times, the next few days, they wondered at his absent-mindedness.

A week later, Chester burst into Ward's office.

"Do you suppose Uncle Harry has taken us seriously? I just heard, from pretty reliable sources, that he has taken over the old Perkins place we spoke of, and engaged Mrs. English—you know, Judge English's impoverished widow—to act as hostess and housekeeper."

"Well, I'll be darned!" Ward exclaimed. Then, in mock seriousness: "You want to be careful what notions you put into your uncle's head, my boy. Remember, forty is a dangerous age."

"Say, if that is what's in the wind, he is picking out a wife in the same systematic manner he has done everything else, now, isn't he?" Chester laughed.

"You mean, he is starting out that way," Ward corrected him.

## II

It was several months later that Maxine Norris stopped in the hall of Malden Manor for her mail. Harry Malden came up to her with a little statuette in his hand.

"Where would be a good place for this, Miss Norris?" he asked awkwardly, as an excuse for detaining her in his company.

"Oh, isn't it an exquisite thing!" she exclaimed, taking it, and holding it delicately.

Malden was absorbed in admiration, too—but not over the statuette. Miss Norris led the way into the library, and, standing in the center of the room, surveyed possible positions for the lovely thing.

"Here, under this oil painting," she decided, and placed the figure on the top of the bookshelf, removing a vase.

"This vase is a dear old Venetian thing," she added. "I adore it most of all the wealth of beautiful things you have about—but that doesn't seem exactly the right place for it, do you think?" She turned to Malden.

He flushed under the attention of those alert brown eyes.

"A woman knows more about such things, particularly you," he faltered, and was about to ask where to put it, when she placed it on the floor in the corner, admiring it from three paces off.

"It shows up gorgeously there, if you're not afraid some one will knock it over," she said.

In another second, Malden was watching her trim figure disappear up the stairs.

He dropped into a deep leather upholstered chair, and tried to classify his feelings for this mere slip of a girl, as the same he felt for Chester Hardin, his nephew, whom he had educated and brought up. He told himself it was absurd for a hard-headed man of the world like himself to fall in love with any one so much younger, and one who lived in the clouds of impractical art.

No, what he was seeking was a woman, attractive in appearance, to be sure, but also one who would make a comfortable home for him. He mentally chided himself as he would have Chester, had he seen him losing his head over a girl who possessed virtually none of the home-making proclivities.

It was all absurd, of course. Nevertheless, he found himself picking up the vase from the corner, and starting to the third floor.

He noticed he was dreadfully out of breath, and wondered if he were developing heart trouble. Then he recalled that half an hour before, when he had come to the third floor for the statuette, he hadn't noticed anything wrong with himself.

He was half tempted to leave the vase outside Miss Norris's door. He did. Then he went back and tapped shyly.

"Haven't you a good place for this in your studio?" he gasped. "I'm afraid, as you suggest, it might be knocked over downstairs—anyway, there is too much stuff around down there."

"Oh, I'd love it up here!" She caressed the vase fondly.

Then, looking at him, she said: "Mr. Malden, you have been so very kind to me to fix over this room with skylights and then to put so many of your lovely things in it."

Her eyes devoured the vase; his devoured her, and his heart thumped away furiously.

"I want to make you comfortable," he justified himself lamely.

Miss Norris substituted the lovely vase for an inexpensive but colorful bowl on a corner table.

"Would you object if I had some of my friends up here for tea Saturday afternoon?" she asked, after a moment.

"Not if you include me," he heard himself saying.

"I'd love to have you come, and any of your friends. But I'm afraid you wouldn't be much interested in my kind of people."

"I'm interested in—" he began.

Ben, the butler, appearing at the door, saved him from speaking his thoughts.

"Mr. Malden, excuse me, but Mrs. Bowman wishes me to inform you that she is ready and waiting," Ben announced.

"I'll be right down, Ben," his master said, visibly annoyed at the interruption, at Mrs. Bowman's ruse to corral him, and at the fact that every one in the house seemed to sense his every move.

"I'll have Mrs. English see you about refreshments for your party," he told Miss Norris as he departed. "She has very good ideas."

Malden halted on the threshold of Mrs. Bowman's room, with the same brand of obedience that inspires a small boy who goes to dancing school. His heart was all right again.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting," he recited politely.

"Oh, quite all right, Mr. Malden." The lady tilted her bobbed head and smiled coyly. Her mannerisms and her dress were at least one generation younger than her apparent age.

"Mrs. Darrow and Mrs. Brewster were getting anxious to start playing—you know they are such card fiends. They are already down in the sun parlor, I believe."

"I'm afraid I shall be a very dull pupil, and I understand that good players always hate to play with a beginner," Malden said, almost sulkily.

"Not with me as your teacher," and she rolled her gray-green eyes at him.

They started down the winding stairs, her begemmed little hand trailing along the banister. Halfway down, she stopped short.

"I forgot something very important," she said, and taking Malden by the arm, led him back to her room.

From a little velvet case she took a tiny, but very perfectly carved ivory elephant.



She slipped a narrow green ribbon through the eyelet, tied the ends together, and suspended it about Malden's neck. He flushed and protested, but in vain.

"No! You must wear that. 'Twill bring you good luck, because, you see, its trunk turns up." She held the little charm, leading the way to the waiting ladies, and explaining:

"I watched this being made in the quaintest little shop in Tokyo, and it has been a wonderful talisman to me for three years, now."

"Japan is a fascinating country," he said, endeavoring to cover his embarrassment casually.

"Oh, you have been there, too?" she asked, eagerly.

"Yes," he admitted, and then to the ladies into whose presence they were entering, "I'm sorry to have been the cause of delaying your game."

He shifted about uncomfortably at their evident notice of the foolish little toy about his neck.

Mrs. Bowman, with many sweet glances his way, explained the purpose of the talisman, and the bridge lesson began. But Malden was too ill at ease to comprehend instructions, and he played poorly.

"Oh, well," Mrs. Bowman excused him, "you know, 'unlucky at cards, lucky at love.'" She patted his hand, which he drew away quickly.

Mrs. Darrow raised an amused brow to Mrs. Brewster, and agreed:

"Yes, Mr. Malden, that old adage never fails."

Finally conversation crowded out bridge. They talked pleasantly of countries they had all visited in Europe, Mrs. Bowman holding the reins of conversation.

"Oh, I have the most adorable picture of the Grand Canal at Venice, which I took myself, and then had enlarged and tinted."

Then, playfully catching the suspended elephant in her hand, she added: "You would particularly enjoy that, Mr. Malden, for in all probability you have visited that same spot. Come with me to see it while I tell you its rather interesting history."

He found himself being led through the door, unable to think of an excuse that would free him.

"Won't you come, too, ladies?" Mrs. Bowman added, not too urgently, but they conveniently wouldn't.

"We have seen and done so many things similar, that it makes it seem as though we were old, old friends, doesn't it, Mr. Malden?" Mrs. Bowman purred, as they entered her suite.

While down in the sun parlor, Mrs. Brewster had buried her smile in a bit of lace handkerchief, and Mrs. Darrow had edged her chair closer to her when the couple had disappeared up the stairs.

"My dear, she has literally and figuratively got a string tied to that poor helpless man, as sure as anything. Just watch and see if she doesn't land him," Mrs. Darrow laughed.

"Oh, I don't think the dear has a chance with him. He's head over heels in love with that Miss Norris, the artist," Mrs. Brewster declared.

"Yes, but he's safe there, for she's so absorbed in her art that she doesn't notice him enough to appreciate the fact. And, anyway, he's a great deal too old and staid for her," Mrs. Darrow insisted.

"Well, when it comes to ages, my dear, he is ever so much too young for Mrs. Bowman, though one must give her credit for knowing how to rejuvenate herself. Would that I had her secret!" Mrs. Brewster sighed.

"I understand she has a married daughter," Mrs. Darrow added, as they went upstairs to dress for dinner before their husbands came in from business.

### III

ABOUT two o'clock Saturday afternoon, Chester Hardin called at Malden Manor to pick up his uncle for a game of golf.

"I don't believe I can join you this afternoon; a little artist here in the Manor is having a tea in her studio, and I promised to go," Malden faltered, trying not to appear too concerned about the little artist's party, to his observing nephew.

"All right! Fine! Take me along! I never turn down a chance to meet a new girl, you know," Chester said, and his uncle could only consent. So Chester set about helping to cart chairs upstairs and making himself generally useful.

And, upon being introduced, he immediately put himself at the disposal of Maxine Norris, with an easy freedom that made his shy uncle marvel.

"Miss Norris, I can recommend highly my own ability as an assistant to hostesses," he smiled jovially, and, without

waiting for his services to be accepted, he began to hold cups for her to pour tea into.

Uncle Malden stood by aghast. One would think his nephew had known the girl years, instead of only a few minutes. How he envied the young man's natural ease of manner. But Chester unwittingly monopolized Maxine, and Malden strolled off and let himself become engaged in listening to the life philosophy of a very small girl dressed in a very loud futuristic frock.

Finally Malden, seeing Chester coming their way with tea in both hands, broke in, stiffly: "May I introduce my nephew to you?"

"Chester," he said, taking the proffered tea momentarily, "I want to introduce you to this very intellectual young woman, whom you'll enjoy talking with."

He tried to force the tea back to Chester and escape. "You're my guest; you sit down and let me do that," Malden said, but Chester very affably waved him back.

The young man was altogether too attentive to Maxine for Malden's comfort. He set his face at attention, and let the intellectual little girl soar on, while he tried to devise some errand to send Chester on; but when he got in touch with that young man again, it was to hear him announce enthusiastically:

"Uncle Harry, I think I'll move from the club to your Manor. I'm getting a bit fed up on that place, and I'd thoroughly enjoy being with you."

"Wish we had room for you, but I'm afraid we haven't just now," Malden responded weakly.

"Well, I might get a room near by, and take my meals here until you do have a vacancy," Chester persisted.

"You better stay where you are, my boy," his uncle advised. "It would be very awkward getting along without all the conveniences you are used to."

"I'd trade the conveniences to be with you, any old day," Chester answered, his eyes following Maxine.

After dinner that night, Chester cornered Mrs. English, the hostess.

"Haven't you some out of the way corner to tuck me into?" he asked. "I'm awfully tired of living at the club."

"Why, yes," she said; "there's a small room at the back on the second floor, if you don't mind sharing the bath with two others."

"I'll move in Monday," he agreed, and went off with the glad news to his uncle.

But he found him playing bridge with Mrs. Bowman, Mrs. English, and a new young man, so he took the occasion to make a little party call upon Maxine, at her studio.

He found her in a brown study over an almost finished canvas. Chester gazed upon the picture, respecting her silent mood.

Finally she said: "I'd give anything if I had three days longer. I've just got in the spirit of the picture, now, and could put ever so much more feeling into it if I could do it all over."

"What's the hurry? Why can't you have three days longer?" Chester asked.

"I'm entering it in an exhibit at the Art Institute, and by Monday night at five, it must be in," she explained. "Why aren't you some fairy godfather, who could just as well as not get me three little extra days?"

"Well, if you ask me, I think your picture as it is will be the best one there," he said, and then, turning to his uncle, who appeared at the door: "Do you see anything the matter with Maxine's picture? She's wishing for some fairy godfather to usher three extra days in for her between now and Monday, so she can have time to do her picture over before they close the doors on entries for an exhibit at the Art Institute."

He was calling her "Maxine," Malden noticed. Gad, how fast this new generation works! And she, in turn, was taking Chester for granted.

"Who has charge of entries?" Malden asked.

"Mr. Frost," Maxine replied.

"Well, he is a good friend of mine—helped me pick out some paintings. I may be able to play fairy godfather to you," he said, congratulating himself at the advantage he had gained that time over his aggressive nephew. And then turning to Chester: "I came up to ask if you wouldn't take my place at bridge downstairs. You like bridge better than I do."

Chester suddenly found he didn't care at all for bridge, but he began to sense his uncle's motive, and very graciously accepted the proxy.

And then Maxine said: "Yes, Mr. Malden, this picture is all wrong. It is too labored. I haven't been able to get into the

swing of it until now. And I want so much to win that prize. I'm full of the spirit of the picture now, and if I had three days longer, I know I could do something good."

"I'll call Frost up at his home right now, if you'll excuse me."

A few minutes later he returned in triumph.

"It's all right," he announced. "I reminded him of a pinch I once helped him out of, and told him here was his opportunity to do something for me. So he is giving you till Wednesday, at five."

"Mr. Malden, I just love you for that," Maxine said impulsively.

Thus encouraged, he patted her shoulder in a manner awkwardly paternal, in spite of feelings that were anything but fatherly.

How the old heart was acting up! With his free hand he captured one of hers timidly.

"I'd do anything in the world to make you happy," he heard himself saying.

"You are always thinking of the nicest things; I do appreciate it so much," she told him. "You see, none of my family ever wanted me to paint, and I'm only used to having obstacles thrown in front of me."

What Malden wanted to say was that if she would marry him, he would spend his whole life removing her obstacles. But what he actually stammered out was: "Then adopt yourself a new family that appreciates you and spends its time removing your obstacles."

"You are a dear," she declared enthusiastically, giving his hand a little pat. Then, at the sound of footsteps on the stairs, she slipped unobtrusively away from his side.

One of the other guests looked in at the door, just as Malden had formulated a fitting phrase for a formal proposal.

"I'm going right to bed, even though it's only half past eight," Miss Norris said when the other had passed on, "so I'll wake early, and be ready to start work as soon as it is light enough."

"And if you want to do something else nice for me," she added, "you can send meals up to me for the next four days; that is, have them left at my door. But I don't want a soul to come near me until I've finished my picture."

"Good night, my fairy godfather," she concluded, holding out both hands to him.

He mumbled an incoherent good night that he meant should convey a world of

sentiment. Then he went downstairs in a whirl of uncertainty. Had he made himself clear? Did she really mean that she would be his wife? Curse that man for stopping at her door and interfering!

On the landing below, Malden bumped into Chester, who broke the glad news that he had arranged with Mrs. English to move in on Monday. The uncle was suspicious of his popular nephew. It would never do to have him under the same roof with Maxine—not just at this stage of things.

He did some hard thinking. Ah, the Burlington estate matter would put Chester in Paris for a year, and he certainly wanted to go.

"It's hardly worth your while moving," he heard himself deciding on the spur of the moment, "for we are planning to send you over to Paris on the Burlington estate matter."

At first Chester's face fell; then it lit up into a broad grin.

"Great!" he exclaimed.

"But you don't mind my being with you until I go, surely," he added, pleadingly.

As it would only take a fortnight to get matters in shape for Chester to leave, Malden gave in.

#### IV

HARRY MALDEN had expected Sunday to be a desperately lonely day, with Maxine closeted in her room at work. But the morning brought unexpected responsibilities which kept him too busy for sentimental thoughts.

Mrs. English was taken suddenly ill, and things were in a great furor among the servants. At the last minute six more dinner guests had been added to an already overcrowded dining room.

In the midst of things, Mrs. Bowman bobbed up.

"I heard some one say that Mrs. English is ill. Do let me come right down and look after arrangements for dinner," she coaxed in her most bewitching way.

"Oh, no; I couldn't permit that," Malden replied. Why must she intrude herself upon him now?

"But Mr. Malden, I insist. I know just how bewildered you are to find yourself surrounded by a multitude of things you are not familiar with," she said, tapping him on the arm, "and with which I am perfectly familiar."

With that, she led him back down the

stairs to the dining room, in the middle of which stood the upset butler.

"Sir, there are six more guests than we have room for," Ben repeated as they entered, "and the flowers failed to come."

"Go to my room and ask Mr. Hardin if he will hurry out for flowers," Malden ordered sullenly.

"Now, nothing of the kind," Mrs. Bowman put in, and Ben forgot himself so far as to stare open-mouthed at her audacity.

"Nothing of the kind, Mr. Malden. I have a dozen fresh roses. We will use them, putting a single rose on each table." She looked up smilingly, triumphantly, at the annoyed Malden.

"And, Ben, let me have a list of those who are entertaining friends at dinner, and how many," she added, patting Malden on the arm, and saying: "Now, you just leave everything to me, and don't bother your dear head about it."

Ben looked from Mrs. Bowman to Mr. Malden questioningly, but waiting for verification from the latter.

"Is that quite all right, sir?" Ben finally asked, when Malden indicated neither approval nor disapproval.

"I guess so," he said resignedly.

"Now we can throw the sun parlor open and seat three at each of the little wicker tables, already in there," she suggested, with a great show of efficiency.

This had been Malden's own plan.

"How much quieter and unostentatiously Mrs. English went about things," Malden thought, as he stood there helpless to prevent the aggressive Mrs. Bowman from carrying on the management of his own house.

"You poor boy, you must have been dreadfully bewildered to find yourself without a hostess on a busy Sunday," she said, loud enough to reach the eager ears at the butler's pantry door.

"You are very kind, I'm sure," Malden said coldly, "and now, if you will excuse me, I'll look after another matter. Ben will be right back to help you."

"That's all right. Run right along and take your time. I can look after everything, and I mean to stay by my new post until Mrs. English returns."

Malden sighed helplessly, and left.

Presently Bridget, the cook, rapped on his door and called through:

"Mr. Malden, would ye please be so good as to tell me who's runnin' the kitchen

--me or that Mrs. Bowman? If it's her, I'm leavin' this minute."

"I'll go out and kid the cook," Chester suggested, by way of coming grandly to the rescue. He slipped into his coat and dashed out the door.

"You and I are the boss together when Mrs. English is away," Chester said, grabbing her by the arm and starting toward the kitchen.

"Ah, ye have a nice way about ye, Mr. Hardin," Bridget told him, yielding to his good nature. "That Mrs. Bowman," she went on; "tell me--is there anythin' stirrin' between her and yer uncle? She'd have us to think she was soon to be boss of the whole place!"

John Ward, Malden's law partner, and his wife, were guests for dinner, and sat about the drawing-room with others in the Manor, waiting for the meal to be announced. The great buzz of the conversation in each little group was speculation as to the meaning of Mrs. Bowman's taking things into her own hands. This was further substantiated by Mrs. Bowman complacently placing herself at Malden's table at dinner.

As they left the table, a question flashed over Malden's mind: "Did Bridget remember to send Maxine's dinner up to her?" He would better go in and make sure.

"I sent it up by Mr. Hardin a full half hour ago, and he ain't reported back yet," Bridget told him, meaningly.

Chester was becoming most annoying on top of all his other perplexities, he thought.

As Malden came from the kitchen, Mrs. Bowman met him, and, taking his arm, led him helplessly into the sun parlor, which was in view of the reception hall, full of guests. At once there was renewed gossip.

"My dear, she has captured him!" Mrs. Darrow exclaimed to Mrs. Brewster within earshot of Mrs. John Ward.

"No doubt about it, now," Mrs. Brewster returned, glancing toward the sun parlor.

"What chance has a bashful man like Mr. Malden with a clever woman like Mrs. Bowman?"

"It's a shame, for he's much too young for her, and the sort of man who would make a very deserving woman a mighty good husband."

In the sun parlor, Mrs. Bowman was quite aware that all eyes were upon them



—she had planned it should be so. Publicity was a strong part of her campaign.

"I just wanted to ask if you are pleased with the work of poor little me?" she asked.

"Most certainly," he replied. "And I appreciate the spirit that prompted you to do this." In his embarrassment he became more fulsome than he had meant.

"You really need some one to take hold here, who has a personal interest, which you can't expect from any one you hire," she added, and paused to note the effect.

"You—you don't—" he faltered.

"Yes, I would love to," she spoke up quickly.

"But—but—you are surely not serious. You would get tired of it as a permanent thing."

"Not under the right circumstances," she replied coyly.

"I mean—I mean—" he stammered.

"I understand, my dear. But let's go where we can be alone and unobserved and talk it over," she urged, her face lighting up hopefully.

Good Lord, what had he got himself into now? He pulled out his watch.

"You'll have to excuse me, I've forgotten an important call," he mumbled, and fled.

"How can I get rid of that woman?" he sighed in despair, as he reached the temporary safe shelter of his own room.

In his mind's eye he could see her in the drawing-room, provoking and accepting congratulations. If only he could flee from it all, instead of having this white elephant of a Manor on his hands, and having to face the music day after day with all eyes and ears turned his way, and Mrs. Bowman forever putting him in awkward positions before them.

What a mess! Here he had tried to propose to one woman, and wasn't sure she understood, and, on the heels of that, had been misunderstood by another woman as proposing to her.

But the balmy spring air and the twittering of the birds filtered through Malden's window, and it all was not conducive to long brooding over his dark situation—not after he had gained a favorable status with Maxine. On reflection, he was certain of that. Slowly the muscles of his face relaxed; he filled his favorite pipe, and sat down in a deep easy-chair by the open window.

Just what would be the best way to go

about hurrying matters up with Maxine and making certain of her? Exactly what did he say to her, and what was her reply to him?

Had he really asked her to marry him as he had planned and rehearsed? He thought he had. Anyhow, she had called him "an old dear," as if she meant every word of it.

Was Chester really such a peril? His nephew couldn't give her the advantages he himself was able to afford. However, Chester would be on his way to Paris soon, now.

He was fond of the boy—couldn't care more for him if he were his own flesh and blood. Chester wasn't old enough to settle down yet, and he probably had no such intentions, but it was just as well to put temptation out of his way.

When Maxine got through with her three-day grind, he would plan some pleasant diversion for her; he might give a nice party there at the Manor—that is, if Mrs. English were back. What a difference it did make with her away! He had never appreciated how capable she was—how quietly and unostentatiously she went about everything.

Yes, they would have a nice party for Maxine, and he would invite John Ward. That would be a good chance to have John meet his future wife. Guess he would be surprised at what an old bachelor could do when he set about it in earnest. Harry chuckled.

Poor little girl, slaving away upstairs! He wished he could give her a lift on the ladder of fame. But he would let her have her own way and stay locked up, as she had insisted.

He wondered if, away up there, she might be dropping her brush occasionally to indulge in thoughts of him? Or was she too engrossed in her picture?

He would give anything if he could be the judge at this exhibit. He might even strain a point in her favor, if it were necessary. But it wouldn't be necessary. She had real talent.

It wouldn't do any harm to see Frost, meanwhile. He would ask him to luncheon on Monday. He really wanted to have a little visit with him, anyhow.

Whether that had anything to do with Maxine's taking the first prize at the exhibit, is doubtful. At any rate, her painting was an exquisite piece of work, and

she was so happy over her triumph that she could hardly contain herself.

"I can never, never thank you enough—you are such a dear to have gained that extra time for me, and Mr. Frost was so nice to me, too!" she declared to Malden. "Mr. Frost said he would give it a permanent place in the institute after the exhibit. Was any one ever so fortunate?"

"No one was ever so deserving," Malden corrected, and then, edging toward her: "In fact, I think we should celebrate with a party, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, I think that would be lovely—where?" she asked. "I'm just in the mood to play very hard right now."

"All right, we'll give a big party downstairs. Mrs. English will be back to-night. We'll arrange to have it to-morrow night," he suggested.

"Oh, I think that would be too grand for anything," and her hand went out to meet his in a long clasp of appreciation.

Malden was nerving himself up to kiss her, but at that moment in bounced the irrepressible Chester.

"Hello, everybody!" he said. "What's the good news, Maxine? Why all the broad smiles?"

"It's your uncle you need to pat on the back, for if it hadn't been for him, I never would have—have taken the prize," she said slowly and modestly.

"You don't mean it! But I knew you would. Hurray!" and he grabbed both hands and swung her around a half dozen times. "Hurray for you!"

Malden, standing helplessly by, was again seized with jealousy of his debonair and confident nephew.

### V

HARRY MALDEN greeted Mrs. English cordially on her return, and, with apologies, asked if she felt equal to a party the next night.

"Oh, yes, I'm feeling entirely myself again," she assured him.

"Well, I want to make it quite an elaborate party, as it's to be a little celebration," he told her.

Preparations for the party proceeded smoothly and swiftly. But it so happened that between this extra stir at the Manor, and unusually confining work at business, he had no chance to see Maxine alone before the party to make sure his grounds.

He had just started up to her studio for

her that night when she appeared, radiant in a bright pink bouffant taffeta gown.

"Oh, isn't this a gorgeous party?" she whispered to him, as they entered the drawing-room, where the orchestra was playing and a dozen couples were dancing.

"Let's dance," she suggested, looking about the room to see who was there.

He was about to suggest they sit down and talk instead, which would give him a chance to settle things, but at that moment Chester dashed up to them.

"Well, at last! I thought you would never come. Dance with me?" he asked.

Harry cursed himself then for not knowing how to dance, and for having a good-looking nephew who did.

Maxine looked at Malden expectantly, but all he could say was: "I don't dance; I'm sorry," and watch Chester bear her off.

"Oh, there you are!" Mrs. Bowman exclaimed, snuggling up to him. "I have been waiting to dance first with you," she beamed, and stood, eager for his embrace.

"I'm sorry, I dance even worse than I play cards," he told her coldly. "In fact, I don't dance at all."

If he had been too occupied to get a chance to talk with Maxine since Saturday, he had also enjoyed keeping out of a private talk with Mrs. Bowman, much to that lady's chagrin.

"Well, I really never cared much for dancing, myself," she said, now planting herself by his side, apparently for the whole evening.

Twice he tried to leave her in the care of other men, but she was back at his side with some pretext or other. When John Ward came over and asked her to dance, she would have made some lame excuse, but that gentleman had her out on the floor before she could think up one. Malden took this occasion to scurry off in search of Maxine.

She was again dancing with Chester. So he sat down to talk with one of her artist friends, with whom Maxine had been most of the evening, in the hope that the girls would join them.

Presently he saw Mrs. Bowman coming. He broke into the little artist's conversation to excuse himself, and fled to the dining room, where Mrs. English was readjusting some flowers.

"I think we'd better serve supper at twelve, don't you?" she said, looking up.

"That will be in half an hour," Malden answered, looking at his watch.

As he turned away, a sudden inspiration hit him. Of course, he must see to it that Mrs. English was provided with a supper partner. Here would be a means of keeping Chester out of mischief. He turned to hunt him up, but John Ward touched him on the shoulder.

"Let's take a short smoke outside," Ward suggested.

They strolled to the end of the long porch and sat down on the railing.

"Now that you've tried out living under the same roof with a number of eligibles in order to study their qualifications for a wife, what do you think of the plan?" Ward asked after a moment's silence.

"Women are puzzling creatures," Malden commented dryly. "Nevertheless, I'll tell you confidentially that I've found the one I want to marry."

"Who is she, if I may ask?"

"The lady I take out to supper to-night," Malden said, looking at his watch again—ten minutes of twelve. He must ask Chester to look after Mrs. English at supper, and then he would have a word privately with Maxine.

Surveying the drawing-room, he found neither Maxine nor Chester. Fortunately Mrs. Bowman's back was turned his way, so he left unmolested this time, to search the sun parlor and the library.

Still no sign of Maxine or Chester. He began to feel apprehensive. And, at that critical moment, Ben came to the door to announce supper.

The gentlemen were seeking out their ladies, and expectant couples stood about, looking to him to lead the way. Twice in the last few moments he had dodged Mrs. Bowman, but she was upon him now before he could repeat the maneuver.

Taking him by the arm and starting toward the dining room, she said: "We'd better make sure Mrs. English has the favors I sent down, before people go in to supper."

To his horror, Malden realized he was being propelled into the dining room, and that the rest had taken the supposed cue and were following, amid significant glances and whispered comment, induced by his statement to Ward that the lady of his choice was the one he would take in to supper. This information Ward had confided to his wife, and the news being too

good to keep, she, in turn, told it to Mrs. Darrow in strict secrecy—and so on.

Malden glanced back just as Maxine and Chester emerged, arm in arm, from the garden, blindly engrossed in each other. It was clearly too late to separate those two, but it was equally out of the question for him to take Mrs. Bowman in to supper in view of what he had told Ward.

Not knowing what else to do, Harry Malden ignominiously bolted through the butler's pantry door, the nearest available avenue of escape, leaving Mrs. Bowman, outwitted for once, standing alone in the middle of the dining room, the center of curious speculation, now not so welcome to her.

The door swung closed after him, and he was safe for the moment, at least. He found himself gazing at a lovely creature he had really never seen before.

Mrs. English, whose gentle dignity had given Malden Manor a refining influence, had just at that moment come from her room, where she had, for the first time since her period of mourning, donned a colorful evening gown. How amazingly well it brought out all her quiet, elusive charm!

And what a contrast she was to the scheming and overwhelming Mrs. Bowman, whose footsteps he even then heard following him to the pantry door!

"May I have the pleasure of escorting you in to supper?" Harry Malden hastily asked Mrs. English.

He barely heard her surprised acquiescence. She easily hid from him her pleasure over being his choice on this important occasion.

With the charming Mrs. English on his arm, he entered the dining room, confronting the nonplused Mrs. Bowman. John Ward, who had been too absorbed in the drama being enacted to select a supper companion until all the ladies were chosen, stepped into the breach at this moment, offering his arm to Mrs. Bowman.

Standing beside Mrs. English, at the head of the table of honor, while the guests filed to their places, Malden confronted a battery of faces that sought to be discreet, but betrayed, in varying degrees, inquiry, surprise, and approval.

But he was too absorbed in his own inner turmoil to give much heed. He had settled with Mrs. Bowman. That was certain to all beholders.

But how about Maxine? Instinctively,

he felt he had lost her. But did he care? This question was answered the next moment, as Maxine and Chester passed behind his chair. Chester drew him aside and whispered:

"Can't keep it a secret, Uncle Harry. Maxine's going to Paris with me!"

Suddenly Harry Malden knew that all was as it should be—youth to youth. He

looked down at the lovely woman at his side, and saw in her the ripened fulfillment of the girlish promise in Maxine.

"Perhaps the experiment of living under the same roof with eligibles might turn out successfully after all," he thought.

And a month later he was sure it had, when Mrs. English said "Yes!" to his plea.

### LOVERS OF PERSEPHONE

STRANGE that unsightly things, wasted and vile,  
Dyed with dark sins, with dripping, brutal maws,  
Should dare on beauty's moonrise cheek to smile,  
And grasp them in their twisted, hairy paws!

I am a soul deep down 'mid darkest shades;

There is no fouler soul or face than mine,

Yet on that loveliness that never fades

I dare to look—the young Queen Proserpine;

Yea, even dream—oh, face of haunted gold!—

To press my snouted lips on lips divine,

And in my horrible arms her to infold.

She, like some lily moonlit on a stream,

That makes all hell to blossom like a rose—

Yea, even of her I have dared to dream,

And to my brute breast her white bosom hold—

She that the king of hell once reft away

From flowering Enna on a summer day,

And the wide earth with dewy tears is wet

Till for a little while, when spring returns,

She, too, comes back to bring the violet,

And on her mother's breast that for her years

Throws her sweet self, and on her lips are set

His lips once more, and all the world is bloom,

Forgetting Hades and her yearly doom.

All lovely faces are as hers the prey

Of monstrous hands that pluck their blossom bright,

Daring to use their beauty for a day,

Snatching them down in noisome gulfs of night.

I, too, have profaned beauty even as they.

Oh, face most fair that under heaven hath smiled,

Oh, body all of ivory and myrrh,

Alas, her beauty I, too, have defiled,

I, too, my monstrous worship brought to her!

Never was sin so blasphemous as this—

To thrust upon her sacred lips my kiss,

To run my horrible fingers through her hair.

Yet I have looked upon her fairy face,

Held her a moment in my foul embrace;

And though forever in hell for this disgrace

I burn, my pain shall not be all despair.

Once there was golden honey on my tongue,

Once in my arms was moonlit ivory;

Thus, even in hell, my heart is all a song,

And there are kings in hell that envy me.

*Orville Bennet*



# Double Sixes

A STRANGE TALE FROM THE SOUTH SEAS, INVOLVING A WONDERFUL WOODEN LEG AND A PAIR OF LUCKY DICE

By Rolf Bennett

IN all the wide Pacific—at least, in that part of it which lies between the twentieth parallels north and south of the equator—there was not a leg which could, so to speak, hold a candle to the one possessed by Captain Amos Blake. Other artificial legs there were, quite modern affairs with springs and other gadgets that enabled the wearer to twiddle his wooden toes; but even these would not bear comparison with the marvelous mechanical contraption which Captain Blake had invented, had built to his specifications, and was continually improving.

The captain's leg was so filled with springs, levers, wires, and other contrivances, that, as its owner proudly declared, it only needed a small petrol engine inside, and the darned thing would have walked by itself. It had, indeed, become a subject of boastfulness and pride among the planters, traders, agents, and skippers of those latitudes, who had come to regard it as a sort of national possession like the Yellowstone Park or the Tower of London.

Of course, there were many people, casual visitors to the Pacific, such as tourists and literary persons seeking "atmosphere," who had never even heard of it; but the loss was entirely theirs. They might feast their eyes on the celebrated Bain de Loti, or gaze entranced at the indescribable beauty of the Diadem Peak; but, in the opinion of those who knew, they missed the greatest wonder of all.

As the fame of his leg had spread, so Captain Blake's prosperity had increased. While other skippers were touting for cargoes, or beating from island to island with only half-filled holds, Captain Blake's schooner, the *Laughing Lady*, would stagger into Suva laden to the hatches with copra and shell. This was due to the fact

that most of the planters and agents saved their cargoes for him whenever possible, so that they might hear about, and see, the latest device that he had installed inside his artificial leg.

Incidentally, the captain had the best fund of anecdote of any man in those parts, could play poker like an angel, and could lose like a sportsman. For the rest, he was a powerfully built man, of about fifty, with iron-gray hair, small but penetrating blue eyes, a face that looked as if it had been roughhewn out of mahogany, and a voice like a Klaxon horn.

Although this remarkable leg of Captain Blake's had brought him fame and prosperity, while its ever increasing number of improvements impressed his friends with wonder and awe, it had never been associated with anything exactly sensational. By "sensational," I mean that it had never, for instance, exploded, or run away with its wearer, or done anything that might have turned admiration into incredulity or horror. If, therefore, you will bear in mind the respect accorded both to it and to Captain Blake, the following strange events will be the more fully appreciated.

The *Laughing Lady* had arrived rather late in the afternoon at Tulai, a small island of the Society group, to load copra; but, though everything was made ready, the actual loading was deferred to the following morning. Soon after sunset, according to his usual custom, Captain Blake went ashore for refreshment and diversion at the saloon bar kept by one Mike Dougherty. He stood and accepted drinks, told stories, and eventually settled down to play poker.

Now the captain, as already stated, played poker divinely, but to-night, for some reason, his luck was dead out. As

will happen on occasion with the best of players, he could do nothing right, while his opponents could do nothing wrong.

Long before it was time for him to return aboard the schooner, he was simply cleaned out. It was then that he threw out the challenge which has since become historic throughout the length and breadth of Polynesia.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said, bringing his fist down with a mighty whack upon the table. "I'll stake my leg against fifty dollars with any one of you!"

For a minute or more there was dead silence—a shocked and horrified silence. It was as if a man had offered to stake his wife and children against a sum of money.

Men looked at one another in amazement and consternation. Not one of them had ever seen Captain Blake the worse for liquor—in fact, nobody anywhere ever had. Even at the present moment he looked as sober as a judge; yet surely he must be either drunk or mad!

"Well, what about it?" the captain demanded, once more thumping the table with his fist. "I've made you a sporting offer, haven't I?"

Men shuffled their feet uneasily, ordered drinks, and exchanged desultory remarks; but none took up the challenge. This may have been due to a feeling of outraged decency, to a superstitious dread of playing for such a stake, or to the fact that an artificial leg, however perfect of its kind, is not of much use to a man in possession of his full complement of legs.

"Well, then, darn you, say twenty dollars!" bellowed the captain.

Again there was silence, and then a man who had only just entered the bar spoke.

"I'll take you," he said.

All eyes were turned upon the newcomer, a big, broad, dark-featured man with a squint in one eye and a wooden leg. Save that his name was Radford, and that he owned a coconut plantation on the other side of the island, little was known concerning him. Gloomy, taciturn, and of solitary habits, he rarely mingled with the rest of the white population. Though he was said to drink pretty heavily, he did so at his own expense, and usually in private.

Now it may have been that Captain Blake had issued his challenge out of sheer bravado, or to put into circulation yet another story concerning his famous leg, never dreaming that any one would take him at

his word. Be that as it may, he was certainly the most astonished man of all those present when Radford calmly offered to take him on. Conscious that something more valuable even than his leg was now at stake, the captain quickly pulled himself together.

"Right!" said he. "What's the game to be?"

"I don't play cards, but I'll dice you for it—your leg against twenty dollars."

"Done!" agreed the captain.

Radford approached the table and sat down opposite Captain Blake, while the others crowded around to watch the play. The barkeeper produced a couple of dice and a box, and placed them on the table.

"Mr. Dougherty," said Radford, "I'll ask you to hold the stakes."

He took a wallet from his pocket, extracted some bills, and handed them to Dougherty. Captain Blake hesitated for a moment, then rolled up his left trouser and started to unbuckle his artificial leg. This done, he solemnly handed it over the bar to the somewhat embarrassed Mike Dougherty.

"Will you play first?" asked Radford, and pushed the box and dice toward the captain. "One throw each, and the biggest number wins. Does that suit you?"

The other nodded, dropped the dice into the box, and shook them up. For a moment there was tense silence, broken only by the heavy breathing of the spectators and the rattle of the dice. Then the captain raised the box and tilted it up, and the two cubes rolled out on the table.

As they came to rest, a groan of dismay went up from the watchers. The captain had thrown a one and a three. He was bound to lose.

Then Radford gathered up the dice, toyed with them for a moment, and finally dropped them into the box. A smile of anticipated triumph played about his mouth as he started to shake the box. He continued shaking it for so long that at last the nervous strain was more than the onlookers could bear.

"Throw the dice and get it over!" growled a voice from among the spectators.

"I'll throw when I'm ready," said Radford, still smiling to himself.

He gave the box a final shake, and pitched the dice out on the table. Two sixes!

"My leg," he said.

In the stunned silence that followed his defeat, Captain Amos Blake turned to the landlord.

"I've played and I've lost. Dougherty, give him my leg."

With the air of one reluctantly committing a sacrilege, Mike Dougherty placed the leg on the table in front of its new owner. He also laid the bills down beside it. Radford unbuckled his own wooden leg—a rough, cheaply made affair—and placed it on the table.

"It's no use to me now," he said, "so you may as well have it, Captain Blake."

"I'll take it," replied the captain, "for I can't hop about on board ship with only one leg; but I'm not accepting charity from any man, and when I come back next trip, to have my revenge, I'll pay you the price of this leg."

"Right!" answered Radford. "A dollar is the price, Captain Blake."

## II

On the following day, having loaded with copra, the *Laughing Lady* hoisted her canvas and slowly drew away from the island.

Captain Blake, wearing his secondhand wooden leg, stumped awkwardly about the deck of his schooner, finding some difficulty in adjusting himself to this unfamiliar support. Though he had displayed no emotion when parting with his own precious leg, it was clear to the members of the crew that its loss had affected him deeply.

Usually cheerful and good-hearted in his rough, boisterous way, he had become moody, taciturn, and querulous. No one seemed able to do anything right, and, as the voyage progressed, scarcely a day passed without some unfortunate man receiving a dressing down from the skipper.

Still, they made allowances for him. Just as they had in some measure shared his glory as the possessor of the most wonderful mechanical leg in the Pacific, so they loyally shared his misfortune and suffered his irascibility in sorrow rather than in anger. And yet, as events proved, so far from having lost prestige, Captain Blake rose to an even higher pinnacle of fame than ever. The story of how he had staked his leg against twenty dollars, and lost it to a one-legged planter, was broadcast throughout the Pacific.

It was told and repeated in every club, store, and saloon bar from Honolulu to

Sydney. Wherever Americans and Englishmen met, they hotly contested for the honor of claiming him as a compatriot.

Captain Blake, however, having as yet no suspicion of all this, remained morose, irritable, and exacting—so much so that in Suva two of the hands deserted, and were replaced by strangers who, before they had been many hours aboard, heartily wished they had stayed ashore.

At last, some nine weeks later, the *Laughing Lady* once more dropped her anchor in the lagoon which served Tulai as a harbor. The sails had been furled, and the hands were swabbing down the deck, when Captain Blake happened to notice that the fore-topsail had a distinct bulge on one side of it.

Time was when such a trivial detail as this would have escaped his attention, or, had he seen it, would have been ignored. As it was, he burst into a flood of fierce invective, and ordered the luckless culprit to go aloft again and furl the sail properly.

Rendered nervous, possibly, by the captain's fury, the man missed the footropes as he lay out on the yard, swung for a moment in mid-air, and then came hurtling down head foremost out of the rigging. As it happened, the schooner was rolling somewhat heavily on the incoming tide, and the sailor, instead of striking the deck, fell into the lagoon, which was alive with sharks.

Any man might have been pardoned for hesitating to fling himself into those death-infested waters, but before the man's head had reappeared above the surface, Captain Blake had dived in after him. A fine swimmer in spite of his having only one fully equipped leg, the skipper reached the man's side in a few seconds.

By this time a boat was being hastily lowered from the schooner, but, even as it reached the water, Captain Blake was seen to be striking with his sheath knife at something below the surface.

As the boat came up, and two of the men leaned over the side to grip hold of him, they caught sight of the blood-streaked white belly of an enormous shark. While some of them beat the water with their oars, others grabbed hold of the two men in the lagoon and dragged them both into the boat.

"I reckon it was a sort of judgment on me, that feller tumbling overboard," Captain Blake confessed afterward. "You see, I knew he couldn't swim, and when I

saw him hit the water, I felt it was up to me to save him. If I hadn't done it, I'd have had his death on my conscience for the rest of my life."

As soon as he had changed his clothes, he hastened ashore to Dougherty's saloon, and inquired eagerly as to the whereabouts of Radford.

"I can't say where he is at the moment," replied the barkeeper; "but he had a first-class jag on last night, so likely as not he's sleeping it off."

"He had so," remarked another man appreciatively. "I ran into Radford last night, and he didn't know whether it was this month or the next. Loaded up to the hatches, he was, and tumbling about on your leg like a barge in a gale."

"All right I'll wait till he comes," said Captain Blake. "I've come here to win back my leg, and a few hours either way don't make any odds to me."

He sat down, ordered a drink, and picked up a six-weeks-old San Francisco newspaper. He read it from beginning to end, advertisements and all, and when he had finished there was still no sign of Radford.

When at last Mike Dougherty closed the bar, the captain promised to return first thing the next morning.

"I'll wait here all to-morrow and the next day as well," he declared. "I'll wait for a month, if needs be."

### III

ON the following morning, as Captain Blake was walking along the wooden jetty, he caught sight of a small crowd of idlers standing at the water's edge a hundred yards or so away.

"A dead shark just been washed ashore," some one told him. "A whale of a shark, too, and all slashed about the belly, as if he'd been ripped up with a knife."

Suspecting that this must be the shark he had encountered on the previous day, Captain Blake elbowed his way through the knot of gaping onlookers. Two or three natives were hacking at the dead monster with knives, but he had no difficulty in recognizing it as the brute which had nearly cost him his life.

"Let's have a look," he said.

The natives ceased hacking and moved aside while he bent over the huge carcass. Suddenly he bent closer still, and, reaching out his hand, felt along the shark's belly.

"He's got something queer inside there, by the feel of it," he remarked, and told one of the natives to get to work again with his knife.

The man did so, and presently, after two or three minutes' vigorous hacking, ripped open the tough, coarse skin.

"Now feel inside," said the captain.

The other obeyed. As he did so, a look of growing bewilderment appeared on his coffee-colored face. For a few moments he tugged and pulled, and then finally brought to light—the famous artificial leg!

After that there was no need to hold an inquiry into Radford's disappearance, nor was there much material for an inquest. The only thing to do was to give a decent burial to the leg which had survived.

Then the question arose, which leg ought to be buried—the wooden one formerly owned by the deceased, but now belonging to Captain Blake, or the mechanical one which had belonged to Captain Blake, but which had become the property of poor Radford?

Eventually the captain himself suggested a way out of the difficulty.

"I came back here," he said, "to play Radford for my leg, and I'll do it. Mike Dougherty shall cast the dice, and the highest number wins."

Every one agreed that this was a fair and sporting offer, and a small crowd assembled in the bar to watch the play. Mike Dougherty, with a solemnity befitting the occasion, dropped two dice into the box and covered the opening with his hand.

"First throw to Mr. Radford," he said.

Once more, amid a tense and breathless silence, the ownership of the celebrated leg trembled in the balance. The barkeeper shook the box and removed his hand, and the dice rolled out on the table. They came to rest, three and five uppermost.

"Captain Blake's turn," he announced.

Though he made no sound, great beads of perspiration stood out on the captain's forehead, and his mahogany face became gray with anxiety as he watched Dougherty prepare for the next and final cast. Once more the dice rattled in the box, then tumbled out on to the table.

"Double six!" cried a dozen excited voices. "You've won, skipper!"

Captain Blake mopped the sweat from his brow, smilingly accepted the congratulations that were showered upon him, and shook hands twice all around.



Right here, of course, the story should end, but it doesn't quite. On the following morning, after the solemn and respectful interment of Radford's old wooden leg, Captain Blake and Dougherty walked back together.

"I don't mind admitting now," said the skipper, "that I was mortally scared the dice would go against me again, and I'd lose my leg for good and all. Yes, I allow I had a bad five minutes!"

The other was silent for a moment.

"Did you notice anything queer about Radford's play that night?" he asked suddenly and meaningly.

"Only that he took an infernal long time to shake the dice," replied Blake.

"He did so. If you remember, he also fooled about with them before dropping them into the box. The way he did it sort of roused my suspicions, for I've seen some funny games in my time. Well, as soon as he'd thrown that double six, and you and him were swapping legs, I quietly picked

up the dice off the table and put them in my pocket. Now, whether or not Radford seen me do it, I don't know, but he never said a word to me about those dice."

"Why should he?" demanded the captain. "They were yours."

"That's just what they weren't. I found my dice on the floor the next morning—and the ones I took off the table were loaded."

"You mean—Radford cheated?"

"I don't say nothing about the dead. Let 'em rest in peace," replied Mr. Dougherty piously.

"Only," he added, with a sly glance at the captain, "you didn't need to have been anxious about that last toss, for you won it with the same dice Radford used."

He paused, fumbled in one of his pockets, and produced a couple of dice. Then, raising his arm, he cast them far out into the lagoon.

"That's just between me and you, captain," he said.

#### ON ANOTHER MAN'S BOAT

On another man's boat  
It is all very well  
For the first day or two you are out,  
But unpleasant as—well!  
It begins to be soon  
When the nerves of the party give out,  
And tempers grow short,  
And sharp words fly about  
On another man's boat.

For men are born thus,  
Even the kindest of men,  
Gregarious but for a day—  
Then frazzle and friction and jarring and fuss,  
And each man is wanting his way,  
And the friendliest heart  
Is for tearing apart,  
And on edge to get back to the shore;  
No! No! My good friend,  
For me nevermore,  
Nevermore on the other man's boat.

For the guest is a slave  
To the other man's whim,  
With forced smile he must sit,  
Manner coldly polite,  
And through sharks he would swim  
In the dead of the night,  
And through stingarees float,  
If only to quit  
The other man's boat.

*Andrew C. McIver*

# Lilies of the Battle-field

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE—A STORY OF THE WORLD WAR  
WHEN MOTHER NATURE TRUSTINGLY ADORNED  
THE DREAD CONFINES OF NO MAN'S LAND  
WITH PERFUMED BLOSSOMS

By Ared White

THIS was not an hour for the pre-meditated hatreds of warfare. Spring, following day upon day of patient effort, finally had achieved the miracle of a perfect May morning—and now nature was radiant in its victory.

Deep-vaulted skies breathed serenity down upon the colorful rolling hills and swales of these Vosges fastnesses, inspiring the full-throated Alsatian robinsons to rhapsody. A vagrant humming bird flitted with feverish energy upon its erratic course, as if to survey just what had been left of its native haunts by these unwelcome creatures of destruction.

High in the heavens a hawk swirled over the deep valleys, above the gory crest of brooding old Hartmannsweilerkopf. It plied the air with the diligence of a reconnaissance plane, and as prudently maintained an altitude well beyond the deadly reach of the purple shadows below.

Underneath were myriad clusters of scrub oak, birch, and willow that had bedecked themselves in the shallow-sea emerald of early summer to outshine the duller year-around green of sturdy pinsylvestre. As a background, the earth's surface had donned a mantle of rich grasses to cover hideous scars and welts that betrayed the savage presence of man.

In a strong-point on the line astride the western slope of the undulating Hohnocks, the outpost infantry platoon of the first battalion was sprawled about the reverse slope of its rifle trench, enmeshed in the compelling sorcery of this May day. Ancient worshipers of the sun could not have prostrated themselves before its beneficent rays with more abandon.

The only movement to mark the American soldiers as living things was that of a corporal, who, driven from reverie by duty, slouched his way to a trench periscope to survey the forbidden terrain lying beyond the eastern wall of the rifle trench.

"They'll be nothin' doin' to-day—why rush that glass every five minutes, like a peepin' Tom!" a private flung at him, irritated by the periodic disturbance of his thoughts.

"Can't tell anything about the habits of the Heinies," the corporal drawled patiently, completing his survey and slipping back to his sun bath in the decomposed sandstone.

Where the strong-point sheered off into a steep slope commanded by enfiladed machine guns and 37-mm. pieces from the regimental headquarters company, a full section of the platoon—the first section—had prostrated itself behind a protecting wall of sand bags, grateful for comparative freedom from the stuffy confines of the trench. The men were grouped, not around their section leader, the blustering, hard-fisted, big-hearted Sergeant Sweeney, but in proximity to Corporal "Wild Bill" Fallet, commander of the first squad.

His was a nickname of contrast, and not that of description. He was the most quiet and unassuming of gentlemen, reared by indulgent parents of vast means.

Bill had swiftly adapted himself to the rough and cheerless life of an enlisted World War volunteer. The patriotic impulse that had carried him into service with the first call volunteers developed, also, his aversion to accepting a commissioned grade.

His wife had insisted, in the first place, that he remain home, protesting that he was two years above the prescribed military age of thirty-one, and need not offer himself as a human target. For the first time in their married life, Bill turned a deaf ear to her counsel.

Then, since he was determined upon going, she urged it as only befitting the family name and position that he go as Captain Fallet—at least as a lieutenant. His reply was to enlist as a private in a rifle company, an act which he performed without ostentation.

When the captain of Bill's company offered him a recommendation to the officers' training camp at the Presidio, the private refused. He preferred to serve in the ranks—to ride behind a bayonet, as he put it. Perhaps there was in his attitude a revolt against the pampered life he had led.

In any event, Fallet gently but firmly declined offers of detail to headquarters, contributed a large sum to the company mess—and, in course of time, became the idol of his platoon. When corporal's chevrons came, he accepted them as merited, and in response to the urgent demand of every member of his squad and platoon.

## II

JUST now, Corporal Fallet sat on an empty goldfish packing case at the extreme end of the protecting wall, knees supporting his extended arms, eyes riveted upon the foreground. Various members of his squad, lolling about, had taken his pose as one of reverie. Not so Sergeant Sweeney, who came up presently from out the strong-point, and stood regarding Bill.

"What do you see out there, old timer?" the sergeant asked, by way of starting conversation. The torpid mood of the outpost had got on his nerves, and he craved the stimulus of human voices.

Corporal Bill made no reply, shifting neither his gaze nor his posture. He was wholly absorbed in what he saw and what he thought.

Sergeant Sweeney, a boastful, blustering man, rough and free in all matters, and yet of unflinching courage, studied Bill's line of vision with anxious eyes.

In peace time, Fallet might have felt revulsion toward Sweeney of violent likes and dislikes, with the impudent face of glinting blue eyes, pugnacious nose, and bantering mouth, above a thickset, muscular body

that usually half slouched, half swaggered. Sweeney, for his part, might not have been attracted by the reserved and aristocratic Fallet.

But war service fixes its own standards, sweeps aside hereditary barriers, and creates friendships that puzzle the beholder. Such was Sweeney's affection for Fallet that he had offered to relinquish the platoon sergeantcy if Bill would accept it. Fallet, in refusing, had clapped him on the back, and called him various vile names familiar to the trench vocabulary, but strange in Bill's, all in an appreciation that had cemented Sweeney to him for life.

"What is it, Bill?" the sergeant again demanded, after eying the ground foot by foot for anything of interest, from boche sniper to Alsatian sanglier. "Don't be a hog and keep it all to yourself—you old reprobate!"

The men of the squad became alert, each man trying to discover what it was that held Corporal Bill's attention. A couple of youngsters, with the curiosity that animates soldiers and small children, left their niches in the rifle trench to crowd into the group.

Bill raised his hand slowly, and pointed to a patch of earth a dozen paces beyond the north flank of the strong-point.

The eyes of his comrades, following the lead, fixed upon a stray cluster of muguet, the Alsatian lily. In the center were several magnificent blossoms, their graceful green sheafs proudly revealing the delicate white petals festooned about slender alabaster stems.

Their beauty, enhanced by the grim precincts of the rifle trench, was compelling. The gentle breeze, as it eddied into the strong-point, was freighted with a magic fragrance that banished the horrors of the battle-field.

"I want those flowers," Bill Fallet said softly.

"But why not cry for the moon while you're at it? As easy to get as the posies!" Sergeant Sweeney blurted out with a laugh. The subtleties of Bill's mood had been lost to him.

No one else laughed. The corporal's wistfulness, this first public expression of something he craved for himself, had touched the others.

"You can have 'em easy as soon as it's dusk," Private Ross, of Bill's squad, suggested. "I'll get 'em for you right after

mess—and they'll keep till morning in my canteen cup."

"Fine chance you'll have moving out there by dusk, or even at starlight," Sergeant Sweeney scoffed, still oblivious to the general mood. "That's one place on the map that Heinie keeps covered with lead, day and night."

"I want them—and I'm going to have them—now—not to-night," Bill announced gently.

The men of the section looked from one to the other. Gather the muguet now!

There could be no mistaking the words of their corporal, but it was so unlike Bill to be unreasonable. The picking of that bunch of Alsatian lilies of the valley would be a madman's act.

"Better rig up a fish pole and angle for 'em—you certainly ain't going out there now," Sweeney declared.

"I'm going to pick them—with my own fingers—in the sunlight," Corporal Fallet said.

His gaze remained fixed upon the muguet as he spoke. He had carefully weighed the situation, and his decision was made.

The spell of the lilies, the ravishing air of Maytime, held him in their thrall. He had reverted for the moment to the gentle, peace-time William Fallet, and he craved those lovely blossoms for a definite purpose.

"One single step beyond the sandbags, and—*pouf!*—out goes Wild Bill," Sergeant Sweeney asserted. "You'll stay right where you are, and forget the posies."

The sergeant's order met the approval of the section. His way of expressing it might have been more considerate, but Bill's was a strange whim, and must be suppressed.

### III

COILED in the distant foliage, with its tail below ground, was the many-headed serpent whose sting, delivered with the quickness of lightning, meant death within the one-thousand-yard range of its fangs. Its unseen eyes were sleepless, its blood lust insatiable.

The subtle chemistry of a perfect day in May might soften its inner moods, but not its outward ferocity. It had never failed to strike at the scantiest fragment of a human target—the top of a head lifted indiscreetly above the trench.

No matter what its mood might be to-day, it could not be expected to differenti-

ate between a flower-picking mission and an impending assault. It punished with death the capital offense of stepping out into the free air within range of its poisonous fangs.

To-day the serpent seemed to slumber. Not a hiss had it uttered in its lair on the eastern slope across the verdant little valley.

The enemy must have come under the spell of the springtime miracle, Bill Fallet mused. What living man, with the witchery of the muguet searching his soul, could turn to the red mission of killing a fellow mortal?

"I'm going," Bill announced again, rising leisurely.

Sergeant Sweeney caught him by the arm.

"You're going to whip me first—and then the whole platoon!" he growled.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Sweeney," Fallet protested in his quiet way of registering reproof. "It's safe enough. I'll be back here in a jiffy—besides, I simply must have those flowers."

"Even if you do make it, Bill, it ain't worth taking the chance," Private Ross broke in. He was a grocer's clerk from Fallet's home town, and his devotion to Bill was second only to that of Sergeant Sweeney.

"What do you want with 'em? Why not say it with dollars, instead of flowers—and make the skirts happy?" Sweeney blurted, attempting to force the situation with rough humor.

Corporal Bill flushed.

"I want them to send home to my wife," he replied evenly. "They gave me a message from her—those flowers—and I want to press them and mail them to her—to carry my message back. She will understand, Sweeney, even if you don't."

The sergeant's eyes fell, and the members of the squad squirmed with him under the reproof. They understood.

There was nothing irrational in Bill's intention. In lesser degree, the fragrance of the muguet had awakened thoughts in his comrades' minds that had nothing to do with bayonet thrusts, and machine gun bursts, and trench knives driven at the throat in the dead of night.

"Sorry I said what I did, Bill. I—I—didn't know what was on your chest," Sweeney apologized.

"It's all right, Sarge," Fallet declared,



smilingly. He turned toward the jump-off. Sweeney again caught him by the arm.

"Don't go out there, Bill, as a favor to me—as a favor to all of us," he pleaded.

"This is a quiet sector," Bill insisted.

"Yes, but it has its laws."

"What laws forbid a fellow from picking a few flowers for his wife?"

"I wasn't referring to our regulations, Bill, but to the boche commandment: 'Thou shalt not get in range of our snipers.'"

"Sarge, I don't believe there's a Fritz over there that's got the heart, to-day, to pick off a flower-picker who—"

"I know you ain't been drinking, Bill," Sweeney interrupted. "Listen to reason, won't you? Don't take a chance on the Heinie sharpshooters—to-day, or any other day."

Corporal Fallet reflected a few moments before he replied to that argument.

"I turned my wife down cold when I enlisted in this outfit, instead of going to a training camp," he explained in the tone of a man confessing a wrong. "I think she agrees with me now—but the way I did it hurt her—and I want to square myself. She'll understand when I send her those flowers."

Sergeant Sweeney weighed this statement carefully. His face held a puzzled look, and he admitted to himself that his buddy's sentiment was over his head.

"There's one thing I'm sure of, Bill," he declared. "She won't enjoy getting one of those 'The War Department regrets to announce' telegrams."

Fallet looked out again at the patch of muguet.

"I'm going to show you just how foolish you are," he announced.

He wrenched his arm free of Sweeney's grip, and walked straightway, but without haste, out into the open. A breathless hush seemed to settle over that sun-drenched space of No Man's Land, as if the very breeze had whispered "Hush!"

Bill Fallet reached the little cluster of flowers, stooped over them, and plucked the choicest stalks with a steady hand. Then he turned back, a serene smile on his face.

#### IV

No man dared to urge him to hurry. Their hearts were pounding, their nerves taut, and they stood in tense attitudes, in

mortal fear that the slightest whisper might break the spell that gave the corporal protection. This was a rest sector for the German battle brigades—where neither side exerted itself in fruitless conflicts—and perhaps the enemy was not alert to-day.

Fallet snapped suddenly to attention. His face froze into an expression of vast surprise.

He stood thus, as one transfixed, for a fleeting instant, then stumbled stiffly forward. He made no outcry, and there was no sound until the whistle of a bullet and the crack of a rifle came tardily along the course of the leaden missile of destruction.

Bill drew himself together with a prodigious effort, and went on, holding the muguet extended grotesquely before him. Then he abruptly spun around, hands and face lifted high toward the west, as if in farewell to a loved one in that distant land where the sun had not yet risen—and pitched forward on his face. Again the echoes, chattering from hill to hill, betrayed a rifle shot. This time the weapon had delivered a final message of hate to Corporal William Fallet.

For a moment his comrades were a group of statues. Then there was a general movement forward, led by Private Ross. Sergeant Sweeney sprang in front of them.

"Back there, you fools!" he shouted savagely.

"I'm not goin' to stick in here, Sarge, and let Bill die out there like a dog!" Ross yelled angrily.

"I'm in command here, Private Ross," Sweeney retorted. "Nice mess of a section I'd have if you harebrains rushed out there and let the boches machine-gun you. You needn't worry about Bill. A full-grown man's going to pack him in—not a bunch of you runts!"

Sergeant Sweeney strode coolly out beyond the sandbag parapet. He reached the fallen corporal, and tenderly took him up in his arms.

The echoes awoke in a shrieking chorus, now. Sweeney turned a contemptuous glance toward the source of the disturbance, and walked in unscathed with his unconscious burden. The serpent had missed its stroke this time.

It was not a case for first aid, and a runner went swiftly for the battalion surgeon.

Bill Fallet, breathing heavily as he lay on an improvised bed of olive drab coats, opened his eyes presently. He bestowed

on the group about him a smile that was to haunt them in lasting memory of Wild Bill Fallet.

"Send the flowers—" he began, in a whisper, and was gone.

When the body had been carried away, wrapped in a blanket for interment, the platoon stood motionless in two thin rows down the trench through which the stretcher bearers had departed. There were tears in the eyes of the younger soldiers. Death—sudden and expected—was no stranger to any man there, but the loss of Corporal Bill was no ordinary battle casualty.

Sergeant Sweeney stood with his hands over his face. When he dropped them, they revealed his face smeared in crimson.

"You're hit, Sarge!" Private Ross exclaimed excitedly.

"Forget it!" Sweeney roared. "We're going over!" He waved his rifle above his head for assembly. "We'll get that blood-sucking Heinie!"

His savage impulse was greeted with a yell of delight. These men had been taught courage, and fed on hate. The preceding year of their lives had been given over to a preparation of body, mind, and soul for the exigencies of war.

They had gone into the service to the blare of bands, and marched to their camps amid the applause of multitudes. They had been harangued upon the holiness of their grim mission overseas.

Death! Their spirit had been instructed to mock the Grim Reaper, to scorn the qualms of flesh that set men quaking in peace time dangers.

A caress of the sun, a rustling of green leaves, a song from the trees, the fragrance of muguet, had awakened peaceful longings—but now their world was suffused in red.

"Extra bandoleers!" Sergeant Sweeney ordered. "Get word to the machine guns that we're on our way!"

There was the clatter of rushing feet, the crash of drawn rifle bolts, the scurrying of furious men and boys, their blood afire to the call of battle.

"We'll teach 'em to kill our Bill!" the sergeant gritted. "Fifty for one—that's the price they'll pay. Snap into it!"

## V

THERE could be no mistaking the intention of the section, and the word spread

rapidly down the platoon position. Men came from the reverse north slope of the strong-point, their pulses quickened by the hint of action.

The platoon lieutenant, from his station in an observation post, came pushing his way briskly through the platoon. It had been reported to him that a man had been killed in the first section by a German sniper, but this loss was not one to call him from his observation post. With the instinct of a competent commander, he had sensed a graver situation.

"What's going on here, Sergeant Sweeney?" Lieutenant Dorsey demanded.

"We're going over to get that sniper, and a lot more like him!" Sweeney replied. "Move fast, fellows!"

"Attention!" the officer barked. "What foolishness is this? Sergeant Sweeney, you're excited. Snap out of it!"

Sweeney, his face distorted by rage, the veins standing out heavily at his temples, yielded to the habit of obedience to his officers. He brought himself stiffly to attention, and saluted.

"What's gone wrong here?" the officer asked quietly. He addressed Private Ross, deliberately ignoring Sergeant Sweeney for the moment.

"Sir, they killed Corporal Fallet," was the answer.

Not by the slightest change of countenance did Lieutenant Dorsey betray the pang that the loss of a fine soldier had caused him.

"They'll pay for that at the proper time," he declared calmly. "There's no sense in giving them the pleasure of killing the remainder of the section right now."

The lieutenant, a young man of slender build, but with the level eyes of a fearless fighter, lighted a cigarette. He twice blew a ring of smoke before he appeared satisfied with the result.

"For the time being," he announced, "see that our sniper posts are kept manned at all hours. Did any one note how long it was from when the corporal was hit until the rifle report reached here? Give me all the facts."

The men of the section turned their minds to this question. They finally fixed two and a half seconds as the elapsed time.

"Those Mausers have a velocity of twenty-six hundred feet a second, and sound follows at the rate of three hundred and sixty yards a second," Lieutenant Dor-

sey said, making his way to the periscope and carefully studying the terrain. "From the position in which the corporal was standing when hit, the location of the hits, and the time of the bullet's flight, it appears that the shot was fired from a range of about nine hundred yards. Therefore, it came off the summit of Old Crocodile Hill, over there. It'll take a fine shot to pick up that sniper, but I think you've got a chance if a good man stays on the job, and you put out a dummy to draw fire and locate the target."

The lieutenant looked the group over. His real mission was accomplished. The battle fog was lifting.

"Sergeant Sweeney, how badly are you hit?" he asked.

"Not hit, sir," Sweeney replied. "It's not from me—I went out and brought poor Bill in."

"See to it, Sergeant Sweeney, that none of your men go over to-day without my orders," Lieutenant Dorsey commanded, turning to go.

"Very good, lieutenant," the sergeant agreed, hoarsely. The lieutenant did not note that when the sergeant saluted, a crimson splash came from his hand. Sweeney had a secret reason for keeping his wound to himself.

## VI

FROM the second section of the platoon, Private Ford, a round-shouldered youngster of nineteen, came to fill an emergency. His perpetual smile of good humor, and his record as teacher of a Sunday school class at home, gave no index to his present occupation. He was the best rifle marksman in the entire company, if not in the whole battalion.

A year previously he probably would have recoiled at killing a rabbit. He had never been accustomed to firearms in his boyhood days.

No hint of his latent genius had ever come to him until his first day on the firing line in a training camp. Then he had fairly reduced the bull's-eye to a sieve at two hundred yards, offhand firing. Under expert tutelage, he quickly developed the uncanny skill that can gauge the shifting wind, and drive a bullet into the heart or head of a luckless enemy—visible only through a powerful lens—one thousand yards away.

Private Ford uncased his special Spring-

field rifle, examined it with the eye of an artist, and took his position in the sniping post. Sandbags gave him a protected space in which to fix his telescope, and to work holes in the ground for elbow rests, the while he lay in wait, observing through a narrow opening the trenches of the enemy.

A gnarled oak, ally of the sniper, hung its branches over the point of firing, and gave cover to the discharge spurt. One of the old tree's limbs was gone, others were scarred by machine gun bullets that the boche sent over in rebuke when an officer or a particularly valuable sniper was hit.

Private Ford, as he lay in the sniping post, carefully removed the expert rifleman's badge, which was his proudest possession. It was of solid silver, not the regulation plated affair, and had been sent to him by the members of his Sunday school class.

One by one, the members of Sergeant Sweeney's section went to the periscope. Their eyes found only the monotonous terrain of the battle front.

Below them was the knoll known as Old Crocodile—a thick, long ridge that ran to a broad head near the valley's lower edge. The dark, irregular lines of the enemy trenches gave it the semblance of a huge crocodile. Now it was lifeless to all outward appearance, yet those hideous jaws could open at any moment to snuff out the life of a man.

Sergeant Sweeney sat brooding on the canned goldfish box that recently had been Bill Fallet's seat. Many American soldiers had vowed they had eaten enough of this finny food to form an unbroken line of shimmering salmon from the Columbia River to the Rhine, but empty wooden containers in the front lines were rare.

Sweeney, scoffing at his wound, had taken first aid from his emergency packet. The bullet hole was through the soft part of the hand, and should have had better attention, but the sergeant did not intend to be put out of action by anti-tetanus treatment or other medical corps fads.

"You heard what the lieutenant said, did you?" he asked the men of his section.

"He said for you to see that none of us left this trench," Private Ross replied.

"That was only part of what he said—the least important part of it—if you had two good ears on your thick head to listen with!" Sergeant Sweeney declared testily.

"Well, what did he say that you heard, and none of the rest of us did? And that you want us to remember if you get into trouble?" Ross inquired.

"He said *to-day*. Didn't you hear him say that?"

"What's so darned unusual about that? I can't see why you snap me up for leaving out a word."

"A word, man! Why, that's the whole thing. Did you hear him say a word about to-night?"

"No, but I'm not going out without orders, no matter what he said."

"Of course, you're not! For one thing, I forbid it—and I'm in command here. But that ain't no sign—"

Sergeant Sweeney broke off and smiled mysteriously.

"Wouldn't a first-class Heinie, at the business end of a rope, be a sight for sore eyes?" he remarked casually, and then moved to the periscope to study the reaches of No Man's Land.

Ross stared after him perplexedly.

## VII

THE miracle of a perfect May day began to fade. The shadows overran the purple ravines and crept back along the hillsides, mopping up the radiant hues, and finally engulfing the strong-point with sepia as the sun slipped back under cover of old Hartmannsweilerkopf.

Outposts were relieved, and supper was served. Then the men of the strong-point retired to their dugouts, while the first night relief came out for their long, silent vigil.

Few men were needed for observation, since the strong-points were lightly held in these Vosges sectors that no longer were the scene of furious combat. The Germans held them with garrisons of Landwehr and Ersatz troops, supplemented from time to time by battle-worn shock regiments that, in the Prussian scheme of military economy, were sent here to rest up for the next furious venture into the raging red torrents to the north and west.

Time was when these hills rang with the fiendish echoes of desperate conflict. Thousands of lives had been squandered to no purpose in futile action back and forth among these wooded hills that locked the Allies' right flank and the Imperial German left flank to the Swiss border.

To the west lay the line of French forts

of Belfort and Epinal, connected with fortified barriers along the upper Moselle, pivot of the whole Allied defensive system, and blocking the gap between the Jura and the Vosges. To the east lay the great entrenched stronghold of Strasbourg, and the sturdy barriers to the upper Rhinelands. Rich war prizes, these.

It had cost ten thousand lives to learn a crimson fact either side might have guessed. These flanks were inviolable to an assault.

Grim Hartmannsweilerkopf bore mute evidence of the ferocity of that conflict. Its grassy swards and bulging slopes were pitted like the face of a smallpox victim.

In one desperate contest for possession of the barren crest, fifty thousand shells had hammered its massive sides. Seven German brigades, with auxiliary arms, had thrown themselves upon sixteen battalions of French chasseurs, aided by two infantry regiments, in the last gory contest.

The French and German war heads now had forbidden needless fighting in the Vosges. Their troops faced each other from fixed trenches that, on the summit of Hartmannsweilerkopf, ran as close together as thirty yards. Except for an occasional tossing of hand grenades there, and clashes between patrols at night farther down the slopes of the Linge spur, where the trenches were often separated by wide valleys and deep ravines, the opposing forces hated each other perfunctorily, and with only occasional local outbursts of fury.

There had developed in the Vosges an unwritten code. Tired German troops, resting from desperate action, were sparing of their artillery fire. French guns, now removed to the northern battle fronts, left their pits to green American gunners, covering the roads with a range as far as Munster, but French liaison officers remained behind to see that they did not stir up a battle.

The one immutable law was to keep out of sight, and snipers enforced this relentlessly. Occasionally machine guns on either side drove in a series of bursts, as an admonition over the loss of an officer or a valued enlisted man who had been picked off by a sharpshooter.

It was an ideal sector for raw American divisions to complete their training and undergo a baptism of fire for their part in the mad conflict so near at hand for them on the Marne. It also was an ideal German



rest sector, and garrison for the older men of the Landwehr and the younger levies of the Ersatz.

## VIII

GROUPED about the tallow candle that had been set up on Sergeant Sweeney's goldfish box in the first squad dugout, buddies of the late Corporal Fallet sat in solemn debate. Beside the candle was Private Ross's canteen cup, half filled with precious drinking water to sustain the little knot of muguet that had been taken from the corporal's lifeless hand.

"I think we ought to tell her all about it, so she'll appreciate the flowers," Private Ford argued gloomily.

"You're a sap," Ross replied. "They'd be a nightmare to her if she ever knowed how she came by 'em."

The discussion went on, each man giving his views in somber tones.

"Here's the whole situation, fellows," Private Hobbs suggested. He would have been graduated from high school this year had he not enlisted at the first call. "We've got to do what Bill would want done. Now, he wouldn't want us to wring the heart of his wife by telling her all about those flowers. We should get the company clerk to type a little note, saying Bill happened to pick them for her and wanted them sent on."

"I don't think it would be fair to Bill not to tell her the whole story," Private Ford objected. "She could have 'em framed, and maybe give them to the Sunday school to hang on the wall."

Sergeant Sweeney, who sat brooding in the shadows, arose suddenly with an exclamation that might have been an oath or a moan. He busied himself for a few moments in the squad bag under his bunk, then walked unceremoniously out into the night.

Down the communicating trench Sweeney marched, treading in the manner of a man with a definite purpose. At the front line trench, across the strong-point, he turned south, past the sentinels, to an unpatrolled space, where there was an outlet over the top and through the wire entanglements.

There he listened intently for several moments, then smeared his face, hands, and bandages with dark brown grease that he had brought along for the purpose—to reduce the chances of being seen. Next

he transferred his automatic from its right-hand holster to a place in his shirt, handy to his good left hand, and crawled, snake-like, out in the black void of No Man's Land.

## IX

THE rich full notes of the robinson birds greeted the rising sun as it swung majestically from behind the highest peak of the Linge spur, with the promise of another perfect day. There was no other reveille. The outpost troops were out early for the wondrous pageant of sunrise in the Vosges.

The night had been one of unbroken rest. Not even a patrol clash had set the nerves of sentinels on edge.

Not a single squad had been called from its rest to stand by for expected emergency. No patrols had gone out from this battalion; and if the regiment had its intelligence scouts out, they did not run afoul of enemy patrols or information seekers.

Breakfast was an event that had a greater power than discipline in pulling the men from their olive drab blankets. These grown children of voracious appetites had learned that it is the early soldier who catches a second and third helping at mess, and thus lays by food enough to carry him through the eternity until noon.

If the rifle shot from the first line had rung out before the heavy feeders had exacted their last portion from the mess K.P., it would have gone by unsung. As it was, the majority of the men started forward to the strong-point.

After the dull night, a shot was a shot, especially when fired from their own position. And then they remembered that Private Ford had been in the sniping post since the first hint of dawn. With a sniper's privileges, he would eat when he pleased. Obviously, Ford would rather "snipe" than eat.

The *thrut-t-t-t thrut-t-t-t* of machine gun bursts from some hidden point on Old Crocodile's nose revealed that the rifle shot had struck home. The target had been a sniper, perhaps, or a machine gunner going into the German trenches for breakfast. There was no further protest, so no one of much consequence or high esteem had been struck down.

At the sound of the German growl, the men quickened their pace through the approach trench and poured into the strong-point.

Private Ford was lying flat on his back, smiling a serene satisfaction at the sky. He remained supine until he was certain that the machine gunners would carry the matter no further.

Then he slid down out of the sniper's post, opened the butt plate of his rifle, and extracted the oiler and thong case. Next, with a small nail file, he scratched an addition to the row of shiny notches on the surface of the metal cylinder.

"Got him, did you?" some one asked eagerly.

Private Ford's boyish smile spread slightly. He made no reply.

The question was a foolish one, and merited no answer. In no more eloquent way might Private Ford announce that he had killed a man.

His custom of keeping a notch record of his musketry successes was widely known. The rule of inspection made it impossible for him to keep the record of his heart's desire upon the stock of his rifle, or the lower side of the barrel, where it would be openly before him.

As Ford returned the cylinder to its place in the butt of the rifle, and moved off, his way was blocked by Sergeant Sweeney, who had been strangely silent this morning. He had appeared at breakfast, but had eaten little.

"Where did you get him?" he demanded, an unpleasant note in his voice.

"Eight hundred yards—left of trench line coming out of the woods," Ford replied professionally.

"Sniper or machine gunner?"

"Looked like machine gunner reporting off for the night."

"Lot of good that does us—and, besides, you may have only made a red mark on his shoulder, or tore a hole in his pants."

"He fell hard enough, and did his share of twisting around like a fish out of water," the sniper protested, obviously hurt in his pride.

"It may have been some of that 'kam-erad' stuff to keep a second shot off!" Sweeney challenged him.

"You heard Fritzie growl afterward, didn't you? He only does that when one of his squareheads gets hit!"

"Can't depend on them boches. It may be so—and it may not be."

"Well, I filed a notch, which goes to show what I think. Seems to me you're getting mighty cranky about my work all

of a sudden." Private Ford's smile had given place, now, to a pout.

"After what happened yesterday, I got a right to make sure, and ask you a few questions without having you fly off the handle," Sweeney growled, adding a profane oath.

Private Ford bristled. He had made it his mission to keep profanity out of the platoon, and Sergeant Sweeney had subscribed to the agreement since swearing was so obnoxious to the former Sunday school teacher.

"Next time you swear, I transfer out of this platoon, and you can get another sniper," Ford snapped. "What's more, if you don't like my way of doing things, go out and get your own boche."

## X

SERGEANT SWEENEY's face brightened. He stood in silence for a moment, weighing whether he should disclose what was on his mind. The temptation was too great for him.

"You're a bit too late with your advice, sonny," he gloated. "I've already done that thing—and I didn't get him from cover at a mile range. I went out and got him with my bare hands, and I'm going to invite the whole section to see a boche strung up with a couple of web waist belts—one being Bill's and the other mine. It'll be a good show!"

Private Ford's mouth dropped, and his eyes opened wide in astonishment. Others of the squad gathered close, with the eagerness of children attracted by the promise of some fascinating new game.

There could be no mistaking Sergeant Sweeney's sincerity. His statement was a positive one.

"You mean to say you got a Heinie?" Private Ross asked, to reassure himself that he had heard correctly.

"One the size of a grizzly bear—got him all tied up and staked out back there, waiting for us."

"And got him alive?" Private Ford looked incredulous.

"I'll say he's alive. I took mighty good care not to harm a hair of his head. I wanted all of Bill's old squad in on the show. You're all invited."

Sweeney recounted his excursion the night before, during the dark of the moon, into the eerie shadows of No Man's Land. His first encounter was just outside the

American wire—a German patrol in search of information.

He lay quietly and let them pass, as his only hope there was to wing one of them—and a wounded man would not serve his purpose. Next, he had crawled to an ancient shell hole just beyond the German wire, and lay there, barely breathing.

A huge Heinie, crawling on all fours, came close upon him. Sweeney poked his pistol against the German's head, and ordered him in a whisper to keep quiet. And now the captive was tied up in an old dugout of the third line of trenches that the French had abandoned.

"You're all in on it," Sweeney exulted. "He belongs to me, but I'm not selfish, and I feel you all got a right to help make him pay for what he's done."

There was breathless interest in every eye. The squad gathered closer, lest they be overheard.

Regimental headquarters would want the Heinie if they heard of him, and do nothing more than ask him a lot of fool questions. Then they would send him back to be coddled until the end of the war in one of those luxurious American camps for enemy war prisoners.

"What 'll we do to him?" Private Bates inquired. He was young, and had easily-aroused enthusiasms. The day's prospect pleased him mightily.

"Hang him," Sergeant Sweeney said.

"Seems to me hangin' is too good for a bird like that," Private Balch protested. He was number two man in the front rank of the squad.

"Might hang him by the toes, and leave him there in the dugout during the war," Sweeney remarked thoughtfully.

"What's he look like?" Private Ford asked.

"How could I tell in the dark?" Sweeney demanded, annoyed. "All I can say is he's as big as a bear. Stands six feet two, I'd say—though I made him crawl in, and didn't see him standing up. Speaks English, too. I didn't ask him much; afraid of attracting attention."

## XI

DURING the quiet hours of the forenoon, only the sentinels were needed in the strong-point, and it was then that the first squad of the first section followed Sergeant Sweeney, one at a time, and at discreet intervals, back through the maze of approach

communicating trenches to an abandoned dugout in the third line. Its existence would never have been guessed by one unfamiliar with the system of defensive works in this section of the Vosges.

Outside, Sergeant Sweeney waited until the squad had assembled by furtive infiltration, then got them close together for final conference.

"All in favor of hanging, say 'Aye,'" he said, intent on settling details before entering the death vault.

"It seems to me that Balch is right—hanging is too good," Private Bates put in.

"Why not shoot him?" Private Ford suggested. "That's more in keeping with this soldier stuff. Seems to me they save hanging for horse thieves and the like."

"Horse thieves!" Sweeney snorted. "The idea of comparing one of these squareheads with a poor, harmless horse thief! They're red-handed murderers, the whole pack of 'em—trying to kill off the entire world and hog it for themselves. Don't you fellows even know what this war's about? We'll not honor him with shooting, I'll promise you that—and unless you fellows act fair about this, I'll leave you out of it altogether!"

Private Ford did not persist in his suggestion in the face of this dire threat, and the squad turned to consider other methods of sending Fritz into eternity. They were the court. They had passed judgment. The boche was to die.

They did not discuss the matter of turning him in to higher authority as a prisoner of war. And who would question the circumstances by which a man in the detested enemy uniform came to be hanging by the neck from the timbers of a French dugout?

Fritzie lay bound and gagged, an abject bundle of faded, mud-smeared humanity, in a dark corner of the musty dugout. As Sergeant Sweeney lighted a candle to augment the rays from the open door, a colony of scavenger field mice flicked their long tails and scampered behind beams and into rafters to bide their time. Sweeney untied his prisoner's legs, slipped the improvised gag from his mouth, and jerked him to his feet.

Fritzie was undersized, standing not more than five feet three inches. His tragic plight was softened by the ridiculousness of his martial figure.

His fog-gray uniform was several sizes

too large for him, quite as if he had been outfitted by an American quartermaster. Even his little round skullcap, with its black and white of the Prussian colors, had been made for a head several sizes smaller than his.

He was not far from fifty years of age, and wore the numbers of an Ersatz brigade. Thin, stooped, pedantic of aspect, his air was decidedly more that of the clinic or classroom than of the embattled front in the World War.

He stood on his feet with difficulty, the stiffness in his limbs from the hard night in the dank dugout causing him to move painfully. The light, too, bothered his little gray eyes, and he blinked rapidly in an effort to adjust them. On his sleeves were the markings of a *schrift führender feldweibel*—a sort of glorified clerical staff sergeant.

He appeared more concerned in working the stiffness out of his joints than interested in his visitors. The first squad stood looking with open-mouthed amazement at him.

Private Ford suppressed a charitable impulse to run to his bunk for a bottle of liniment. It was excellent, he had found, for stiffness of the trigger finger. Privates Bates and Balch concluded that they had been unreasonable in demanding something more severe than hanging.

Sergeant Sweeney was greatly embarrassed by the *feldweibel's* insignificance of stature. He looked his prisoner up and down disappointedly.

"In the dark last night you looked twice as big as you do now," the sergeant complained. "You must have shrunk up, thinking over how you're going to pay for some of your crimes."

The little man had got himself together by now. He gazed steadily at Sweeney, trying to conceal his uneasiness.

"You, too, looked to me last night much larger than you do now," he replied in perfect English, with the accent of a cultivated Briton. "I've heard that is a common illusion in battle areas."

"You talk more like a blooming Englishman than a Heinie," Sweeney commented rallying.

"I was at Oxford for postgraduate work before the war," the German replied, nervously. "I speak a half dozen languages, but not all of them fluently."

"Probably a spy," Sweeney sneered, his

voice beginning to harden. "The Kaiser sure went to a lot of trouble and expense in educating you soldiers for this war."

"But I'm hardly what you would call a soldier," the prisoner ventured in meek protest.

"No, I suppose that's a preacher's coat you got on there," Sweeney bantered him. "Next thing, you'll be telling us you came down here to save our souls, instead of to cut our throats."

"I meant, I'm not a regular soldier," the little man explained, hastily. "I came into the service of my country last year for the period of the war only, from the University of Bonn, where I've been an assistant instructor in physics."

"You've sure got a nerve to admit it," Sweeney declared caustically. "Any educated person ought to be ashamed to enlist with that cutthroat bunch of yours."

"I thought I was doing right to help my country," the German said more firmly. "We are only defending ourselves from attack."

"Attack!" the sergeant exploded. "You mean you're only trying to scuttle the whole blamed world. What do you mean, anyway, standing there trying to kid us with such truck? Think because you're a university professor you can talk to us as if we were a bunch of saps, and make us believe black is white! Think we don't even read the newspapers!"

The Heinie replied hesitantly, his trembling voice and faltering eyes betraying the effort with which he held himself together before that fiery outburst.

"I told you only that which I believe to be the truth," he murmured.

Sweeney glowered upon him with growing hostility. "I suppose you've got a fine little alibi for killing the finest fellow that ever drew breath—yesterday—while he was picking flowers to send home to his wife."

"I—I didn't shoot any one yesterday," the prisoner faltered, looking a perplexity that showed through his fear. "My—my business is to decode enemy messages picked up from your radios."

"Ah! And to tell the artillery and the machine guns and your dirty sneaking snipers where the shooting is best!"

"Well—I suppose that is a correct statement," the *feldweibel* faltered. "That's my assignment."

"At last you admit something—and, I



suppose, you'll admit, too, that you have your part, then, in killing off our people. That's a murderer's business!"

There was a long, uneasy silence. "I—I never—thought of it—just that way—but I suppose you are right. It is the duty assigned me."

"Duty!" Sweeney gritted derisively, his rage boiling over. "Duty—you hear that, fellows? That's what he says is part of his duty! Next he'll be telling us the Kaiser's killing us off for the good of our souls, so we won't offend the fairies by picking flowers in the Vosges! Come on, fellows, let's string him up, and have done with it!"

## XII

THE sergeant whipped from his blouse the knotted webs that were to serve as a noose—Corporal Bill's waist belt and his own—and brandished them significantly. He was shaken by the storm of passion that had been brewing in his breast since yesterday.

Trembling as with an ague, the stiff little man, deathly pale and drawn, his eyes starting from their sockets, voiced no protest. They had expected him to collapse, or beg for mercy.

His mind, too, had been prepared for the exigencies of war. It was not as if he had been taken suddenly from the classroom to the hangman's gallows.

Were not these foemen ruthless savages, wholly bereft of compassion, just as he had been warned by his officers? What else was there to expect of American barbarians, or British cutthroats, or French assassins?

Was he not fortunate, after all, that he was not to be tortured? These thoughts lay at the bottom of his abandonment to despair.

Sergeant Sweeney, after several indecisive movements, cast the noose over the prisoner's head and drew it taut with a quick jerk. It disconcerted him that no resistance was offered. Instead, the Heinie summoned all his remaining will power and faced the American with a pathetic show of self-control.

"May I—have a few minutes to—to—prepare myself?" he asked in a low voice. "I—I have a last word to leave."

"You don't mean you want to pray?" the sergeant scoffed.

Private Ford turned pale at this, and

swallowed hard several times. His Sunday school past had overtaken him.

"No, I want to write a few letters—it is asking very little—you will not—"

Sergeant Sweeney turned inquiringly to the sober-faced group of his invited guests of the first squad.

"What you say, fellows? You've got a right to say whether we put it off any longer."

"Seems only fair to let him write," Private Ross replied. The others remained dumb.

Private Ford whirled to the door. "I'll get him some paper and a pencil," he volunteered eagerly.

In a surprisingly short space of time he was back with a package of coarse writing paper and a bundle of envelopes. He brought, also, a small bottle, which he handed to the sergeant with the writing materials.

"What's this stuff?" Sweeney demanded, turning the bottle over in search of a label.

"Why—why, that's my linament—he's stiff in his joints—and it's great for stiffness—fixes my fingers—and I thought maybe I wouldn't need it again," Ford explained confusedly.

"What in the world does a man want with linament when he's going to get bumped off in a few minutes?" the sergeant demanded contemptuously.

"I—I never thought of—that," the sniper answered truthfully.

## XIII

THE little man took the writing material with trembling hands, seated himself with painful effort on the floor near the light of Sweeney's candle, and sat huddled there. He was trying to compose his frenzied thoughts for the writing of this final message.

"None of your funny business, now!" Sweeney cautioned him. "We'll give you exactly a half hour—that's all kinds of time—and we'll be right out there keeping an eye on you. You've got to do your writing in English, too, so we'll know what you're pulling."

He withdrew briskly, walking up out of the dugout with a firm tread, followed by the scraping footsteps of the men of the squad. Outside, he leaned in resolute pose against the wall of the trench, while the others slumped about.

Private Ford continued to swallow occasionally, almost in gulps, and his eyes were wide and staring. It was one thing to fire on a dim, impersonal target seen through a powerful lens. It was another to meet such a target face to face, see the labored rise and fall of his breast, the deathly pallor of his tortured face, the frightened glint of his eyes.

It was one thing for the other men to fire and stab in the maddening turmoil of conflict. It was another to hang a man calculatingly.

At the end of thirty minutes, Sergeant Sweeney went resolutely back into the dugout. The time had come for action, and he disregarded the inner voice that had whispered to him throughout the long wait. His throbbing, swollen right hand had helped to hold him steadfast to his purpose of vengeance.

The captive sealed the letters hurriedly with hands that all but let them fall, worked his way feebly to his feet, and stood in tragic resignation. He handed the letters to the sergeant without looking up at him.

"Nine of them!" Sweeney exclaimed, shuffling the pile of envelopes. He examined the addresses. "Must be writing to all the Schmidts in Germany."

"Only to—to my good wife and—and each of the—the children," *Feldweibel* Schmidt managed to stammer.

Sergeant Sweeney gulped, and stood for a long moment, looking at the pile of letters. Presently he tore open the bulkiest of the envelopes. It was addressed to Mrs. Johann Schmidt, Bonn, Germany.

"We got to see that you don't slip in any of your dirty propaganda," he muttered. "We're responsible for getting these letters into your lines, since our censor wouldn't pass 'em, and I'm seeing to it that there's no trickery."

He stood for a much longer time than seemed to be necessary, reading the first page. It was done in a large, scrawly hand, not unlike the seismograph record of a distant earthquake.

It told of what had occurred, and what was about to happen. There was some simple advice, such as a hurried man might write on his deathbed, concerning the future care and education of the younger children.

The remainder of the page urged the

good woman not to grieve too deeply, and to seek comfort in the thought that her man had died for his country in line of duty.

#### XIV

As the sergeant turned over the first page, a tangle of half dried muguet fell from between the folds. Its fading perfume stole softly into the dank air of the dugout.

He set his chin resolutely, and turned to the second page. It read:

I inclose a spray of Alsatian lilies that I gathered for you last night before I was captured.

They are taking me out to shoot me now. My last thought is of you and the children. Bring them up in the truth, and give thanks that our enemies do not have you and them in their power. I've written each of them. Good-by until—

Sergeant Sweeney roared an inarticulate oath, furiously tore the letters into fragments, and scattered them over the dugout floor.

"So that's the kind of lies you'd feed to your children!" he thundered. "Telling them to grow up truthful in one breath—and then describing how you're being taken out and shot!"

*Feldweibel* Johann Schmidt drew himself scornfully erect, the gesture of a man goaded beyond endurance in the hopeless hour of his death.

"You have no right to rob me of my last letters," he said sternly.

"You've no right to send lying letters to your children!" Sweeney shouted back at him.

*Feldweibel* Schmidt waved his hands in the despair of one who is the victim of brutal injustice.

"They were harmless letters," he groaned. "I wanted my family to think that I died a soldier's death by shooting. They'd never know the shameful truth—a rope around my neck."

"Never know, wouldn't they?" Sweeney stormed. "What kind of a lying old man would your children think they had when you came walking in on 'em after the war?"

The sergeant faced the first squad of the first section of the first platoon with an abrupt, martial pivot.

"Men!" he commanded sharply. "March the prisoner to regimental headquarters, and turn him over to the guard."

THE END